

# THE GREAT SINNERS OF THE BIBLE

LOUIS  
ALBERT  
BANKS





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# THE GREAT SINNERS OF THE BIBLE

BY  
LOUIS ALBERT BANKS. D.D.



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TO  
ALL PASTORS  
WHO ASPIRE TO BE  
SOUL WINNERS  
THIS VOLUME IS  
FRATERNALLY DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR.



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## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

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### **The Sunday Night Service**

ONE of the great problems of the Christian Church of every denomination in all parts of the country for several years has been how to draw and help a large congregation on Sunday nights. A great many experiments have been tried. Sometimes it has been thought that people were prejudiced against the church building itself, and so in many instances this has been closed on Sunday night, and the hall, the theater, or the opera house hired for the service. Such experiments have usually succeeded for a time, but have been, without exception, I think, of a temporary character.

In other places the Sunday night service has been secularized so as to appear just as little like a church as possible. Expensive music has been provided to catch the ear of the multitude. A public reader is sometimes billed as one of the attractions. The discourse of the preacher is not called a sermon, but a lecture, or an address, and is upon some new book of popular interest, or some problem

of sociology, or kindred theme. These experiments have lasted, sometimes, at greater length than the other; but they also run their course after a little while.

Others have given up in despair and closed the church at night. Still others go on their way with fairly well filled pews in the morning, and only here and there a scattered listener at night.

For many years I have been pastor of down-town churches in large cities, and during all those years have never failed to have full houses on Sunday night. The publishers of this volume have asked me to furnish them with a series of Sunday night sermons running through the autumn and winter, and this book is the result. The sermons included in it were preached during the autumn and winter of 1898 and 1899, in the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Cleveland, Ohio. They were delivered to audiences that constantly taxed the seating capacity of a very large church.

The publishers have also asked me to add a word concerning my theory about the Sunday night service and my method of conducting it. My theory is very simple. It is this: men and women will not go to church very long, or very frequently, unless they are personally preached to. I preach on Sunday morning to Christian people largely,



and they in large majority compose the audience. On Sunday night I preach to sinners, as directly and simply and earnestly as I know how, and hundreds of them come to hear me preach every Sunday night. I do not try to preach an easy Gospel. I do not call the sermon a lecture or an address, or try in any way to hide the fact that it is a straightforward, honest effort to win a man from his sins and bring him to the mercy-seat. I go just as directly to his conscience as I can. I plead with him, with all the earnestness there is in me, to pause in his downward career and come now to Christ. I find there is wonderful interest in the old Bible stories; that no story of modern fiction has such gripping power on an audience as the old stories of the Bible translated into modern language and told in the tongue of to-day.

I believe that one of the greatest reasons why unconverted people do not go to church on Sunday nights, in many places, is because they are not preached to. Who of us would want to go very long to hear sermons addressed entirely to somebody else? I asked a layman, one Monday morning, in an eastern city, if they were having any conversions in the church of which he was a member, and he replied, with a sarcastic smile, "O, no; our pastor does all his preaching to the people who are

going to heaven." Many times a pastor refrains from heart-searching denunciations of sin and earnest demands for personal righteousness, for fear of driving away his hearers. But a greater mistake could not be made. There are in every community many men and women who are living sinful lives, whose consciences constantly rebuke them for their course, who are haunted with a longing for something better, and whose hearts turn toward the man who speaks the true message from God, as a flower turns toward the sun. They feel that he speaks to them and they cannot stay away; though the word pierces like an arrow, they will come back again and again, until they are won from their sins and saved.

My own method is to seek for direct results from such sermons whenever and wherever they are delivered. It is a great waste of resources to arouse a man's conscience through a sermon, to stir up his emotions, to cause his spirit to be alert, to make him see his duty, and then give him no chance or encouragement to immediate action. At the close of a sermon especially addressed to unconverted people I always give some opportunity for confession of Christ and the expression of a determination to lead a Christian life. I do not always do it in the same way. Sometimes I ask for the uplifted

hand or the rising in the congregation; at other times I ask the sinner convicted of sin to come forward and kneel at the altar, and at other times invite him into an inquiry room. My idea is not to get into a rut, so that everybody will know beforehand exactly what I will do as to method; though even a uniform custom is better than to arouse sinners by an earnest presentation of God's word and then let them go away to all the hurry and work and temptation of the world without opening the way for them to commit themselves immediately and definitely on the right side. It is very rarely that a Sunday night passes in which some one does not take advantage of the opportunity to make an open and public confession of Christ. Sometimes the church is greatly comforted and strengthened by seeing many come out openly on the Lord's side. Such a close to a day's work is a constant inspiration to the church itself. It keeps alive the evangelistic spirit; it holds the members constantly face to face with the great mission of the church, which is to preach the Gospel to every creature; it develops the gifts and graces of Christian workers; it stimulates and encourages those who have recently come to Christ, and, indeed, keeps the whole church alive to the supreme work of saving men.

Perhaps another word in regard to the character of the preaching would be well, though the sermons themselves are the best evidence of that. I put a good deal of time on the selection of the topic. I try to invent a method of stating the theme in such a way as not to repel people, but rather to attract them to come to hear the sermon. I am sure this is productive of good results. I have known people to come twenty or thirty miles because the theme had been stated in such a way as to catch their attention. The story is told of a young fellow from the city who had been fishing all day in a lake up in northern Michigan, and gave as a reason, at night, for coming home empty-handed, that he "did not seem to be able to attract the attention of the fish." It is just so with the Gospel fisherman: he will come home empty-handed at last unless he attracts the attention of men and women so that they will hearken to the message which he brings them.

After the theme is selected, the next question is to present it in such a way that it will be at once interesting and forceful. In order to win a verdict the lawyer knows that he must not only attract the attention of the juryman, but he must convince and compel him. So the Christian minister, pleading at the bar of the conscience of a sinful

man, must seek to win his verdict. He will not care whether he makes a man laugh or cry, so he causes him to repent and accept Christ. He will not care whether the man thinks he is a great preacher; whether his rhetoric is beautiful or his periods eloquent. He will only care to make the man see that he is a sinner against God, and that Jesus Christ who died to redeem him is now willing and able to save him. Simplicity and blood earnestness—these must be characteristics of the sermon that will gather and hold a large congregation on Sunday night, and help and save them after they are gathered.

Other characteristics are illustration and brevity. It is the age of pictures; not only pictures gathered by the photographer or the painter, but pictures of life and doing in fiction. The novel is a great teacher in our day. And the sermons that are catching the ear and the heart of sinning men throughout the world, and turning them to God, are sermons full of illustrations. Perhaps that has always been true, but it is certainly true in our time. And saving sermons to-day are brief. Especially should this be true of Sunday night. The day is past. It has been full of many things to attract and hold the attention. It is evening. The wise man knows that to do his best work with a

man's heart or conscience he must bring what he has to say into brief compass and strike straight home, and then quit.

I believe full Sunday night congregations are within the reach of every earnest preacher of ordinary intelligence and common sense in all our large towns and cities. Set your pulpit on fire, brother, with an earnest giving of yourself to save men, and multitudes of sinners will flock to see the flame, their hard hearts will be melted, and they will be saved.

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

Cleveland, Ohio.

# THE GREAT SINNERS OF THE BIBLE

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## CHAPTER I

### EVE'S DIALOGUE WITH THE DEVIL

Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.—*Genesis* iii, 1-6.

SOME people have quibbled over this story and raised a laugh by calling it the snake story, and by many kindred allusions, but there is no reason for being troubled at the idea of God choosing to speak



his message in an unusual way, or in his permitting the incarnation of the evil spirit in the form of a serpent. Nothing in the Bible is harder to believe than are the actual occurrences of our own times. If the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Manila without the loss of a single life on the part of the Americans, or the destruction of Cervera's fleet of swift, modern war ships with the loss of but one life on the part of their enemies, had happened four or five thousand years ago, and been recorded in the Old Testament, what derision the infidels would have flung at the story! I can imagine Ingersoll having a lecture on the mistakes of Dewey or Sampson fully as witty and scornful as his diatribe on "The Mistakes of Moses."

It does not make the least difference to us whether this dialogue between Eve and the serpent is a literal historical occurrence or whether it is a poetical portrayal of the drama by which sin became a dark and real fact in human life. Its message to us is exactly the same in either case. One thing is sure, the picture is true to life; and it is full of graphic illustrations, valuable to the men and women who are living now, and upon whom the devil is making attacks as subtle and deceitful as those by which he accomplished the overthrow of Eve.



The devil makes his first pass at Eve by insinuating against God's goodness and generosity. What an ingratiating question it is! "Can it be possible," says the serpent, in substance, with a sardonic smile, "that your God has shut off a part of the garden from you and commanded that you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve's fatal blunder was that she did not thrust his vile suggestion back into his very teeth and end the conversation then and there. If she had been as loyal to God as an old Scotch woman I have heard about, the story would have had a different ending. This old woman was in hard circumstances, and having no bread she knelt on the floor of her little cabin, built close against the rocks of a mountain side, and prayed for some. A roguish boy of the neighborhood, chancing to pass that way, heard her voice and listened at the door. He hurried home and quickly returned with a loaf, ran up on the rocks, and so upon the cabin roof, and tossed the bread down the smokeless chimney. It rolled from the empty fireplace to the chair beside which the old woman still knelt, earnestly praying. There was a moment's pause, and then she was loud in her thanksgiving to God for the speedy answer to her prayer.

"Ye need na' be thankin' the Lord for it," the

youngster shouted down the chimney; "I brought it."

"Ah, my laddie," cried she, from below, "it was the Lord that sent it, even if the devil brought it."

But Eve was not thus loyal at heart. She begins not to state clearly the divine goodness, but to weakly apologize for the Lord, and ends her sentence by showing her own doubt both of God's goodness and of the sincerity of his warnings. The fact is that Eve was all ready for the serpent when he came. She had herself been looking on the forbidden tree with rebellious longing, and had been so taken up with desire for the forbidden fruit that she had forgotten to be grateful for the beauty and fragrance and food that hung from every other bough of every other tree in the garden of Eden. A great many people slander the devil by trying to throw on him the brunt of all their sins, but St. James says: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." So the beginning, after all, of Eve's ruin was in her own ungrateful imagination, where she had permitted these rebellious thoughts to lie until they were like dry tinder waiting for the devil's match.

Eve left out a most important and significant word in stating God's permission to "eat of the

trees of the garden," and thus detracted much from the generous character of the provision which God had made. But when she came to speak of the warning of the Lord against eating of the forbidden fruit, she put in words of her own to make the prohibition seem more hard and severe. From Eve's statement, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," one would think that God had utterly shut up the tree, guarding it with the most extreme jealousy and rigor, when the only prohibition was against eating of the fruit—which would bring sorrow and death. How often we hear people talking the same way now; as though God had given us appetites and desires which were never to be gratified, which are only to be resisted, and intimating that man's only chance for happiness lies in the violation of God's commandment, when the truth is that God has marvelously adapted us to the world in which we live, and in the wholesome and right gratification of our desires there is always peace and happiness; the prohibitions of God's law are only signal lights that tell where are the dangerous rocks upon which our souls may be wrecked.

But Eve also shows, in her answer to the serpent, that she is beginning to doubt the sincerity of the

divine warning. The declaration of God had been: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But after Eve has begun her parley with the tempter her version of this clear and simple statement is, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." "Lest ye die!" This is what she substitutes for "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "Lest ye die!" How different is that from the other statement. The first is sure death; the second is a bare possibility of something happening. Thus Eve was getting ready for the bold onslaught of her enemy which was to insure her destruction. She had lost her vantage ground by not flinging the lie in his face when first he began to slander her heavenly Father.

A few years ago a young Englishwoman crossed the Atlantic to marry a young man in New York city to whom she had been betrothed in England, and who had come to this country two years before to engage in business. She was to marry him at the home of a friend of her mother's with whom she was staying. During the time she was making up her wedding outfit he came to see her one evening when he was just drunk enough to be foolish. She was shocked and pained beyond measure. She afterward learned that he was in

the habit of drinking to excess. She immediately stopped her preparations and told him she could not marry him. He protested that she would drive him to distraction, promising never to drink another drop. But her answer was: "I dare not trust my future happiness to a drunkard. I came three thousand miles, and I will return three thousand miles." How much better it would have been had Eve only said to the advances of the tempter: "No. I will not trust my future happiness to a slanderer of God." But, instead, she parleyed with him, revealing to him the brooding thoughts of ingratitude and rebellion which she cherished secretly, until we are not astonished at the bold, brazen declaration of the serpent in reply: "Ye shall not surely die!" And when Eve had so far yielded to the fascinations of sin that she could hear God's word declared false and still remain in conversation with the person who uttered the declaration, she was ready to take the fatal step from which there was no retraction.

Notice Eve's conduct then: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." How did Eve see

that it was good for food? Was it some new discovery she had made? Or was it that she had come to look at it through the devil's spectacles? Isaiah says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." Association with such people always means deterioration. Eve had conversed with Satan until God's commandment seemed to her to be a lie, and the lies of the serpent seemed to be the truth.

Hear the message, you who need it! Some of you remember when the simple word of God, as stated in your mother's Bible, was law and gospel to you. When God said, "The wages of sin is death," you never doubted it for a moment. When God said, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," you had no doubt that it was heaven's truth; a merciful warning to keep your feet from a dangerous path. There was a time when the declaration of God's word that the house of the strange woman is "the way to hell" seemed certain fact. There was a time when the declaration of the divine word which says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," seemed as natural a truth as the growth of the wheat crop on

your father's farm. What has wrought all this change? How is it that you are so indifferent and reckless of these statements now? Is it because you have discovered them to be untrue? Ah! you know that is not the case. The devil pays the same wages now as in the days of Eve. The adder in the wine has not lost its sting. The house of lust has not closed its back door into hell. The fields of the soul have not lost their fertility to grow harvests according to the seed sown. What has wrought the change? Is not the true answer this: that you have parleyed with the old serpent, that you have hardened your conscience, that you have played fast and loose with your better nature, until you are beginning to call evil good, and good evil?

Peace went out of the garden as sin entered it. Two vagabonds, in fear born of their sins, hid themselves from the presence of God. The garden ceased to be a paradise when sin came to possess their hearts. Truly has some poet written:

"If sin be in the heart  
The fairest sky is foul, and sad the summer weather,  
The eye no longer sees the lambs at play together,  
The dull ear cannot hear the birds that sing so sweetly,  
And all the joy of God's good earth is gone completely,  
If sin be in the heart.



"If peace be in the heart

The wildest winter storm is full of solemn beauty,  
The midnight lightning flash but shows the path of duty,  
Each living creature tells some new and joyous story,  
The very trees and stones all cast a ray of glory,  
If peace be in the heart."

But some one says: "The battle is past, and I am defeated. The sin is already in my heart, and when I would do good the evil more than masters me and leaves me in sad bondage." The same God who brought a message of hope to Eve in the midst of her despair authorizes me to bring you a message of salvation if you will forsake your sins. There is no way you can regain your lost innocence but by giving up your sins and accepting pardon through Jesus Christ.

A little child was one day playing with a very beautiful and precious vase, when he put his hand in through the slender mouth and could not withdraw it. He ran to his father for help; but he, too, tried in vain to get it out. They were talking of breaking the vase, when the father said, "Make one more effort; open your hand and hold your fingers out straight and close together as you see me doing, and then pull." To the astonishment of the family the boy said, "O no, papa, I couldn't put out my fingers like that, for if I did, I would



drop my penny." That was the secret of his trouble—he had been holding on to his penny all the time. Some of you are like him. You would like to be good; you want to be a Christian; but there is some secret sin that you are cherishing, and are not willing to let go. You will never get out of the devil's clutches until you open wide your hand and let go all your sins. As you value your peace, your nobility of character, your immortal life, give up your sins now and forever!

## CHAPTER II

## THE FIRST COWARD IN THE WORLD

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.—*Genesis iii, 9-12.*

THERE is no accusation that will so quickly bring the hot blood of indignation to a man's face as to be called a coward. Perhaps it is because cowardice is the badge of sin. Sin was the source of cowardice in the world. Adam had no fear until he was conscious that he had broken God's law and brought himself under condemnation. He had no fear of the animal world before that. He was master over all the beasts of the field. He gave them their names, and he was put in possession of them. His fear was born of his sin. His intelligence, his power to reason, which was intended to give him control over all living creatures

on the earth, was thwarted when his sin made him a coward.

An Arabic legend which has but recently come into our language tells how a noble young lion burned with a desire to travel over the world.

"Why," asked his mother, covering him with caresses, "why do you wish to leave me? Are you not happy here? Take care, my child; beyond these vast solitudes that make your empire you will meet, among other dangers, the most terrible of all your enemies—that formidable being they call man!"

At last, tired of this warning and taking counsel of his courage alone, the young heir to the kingdom of beasts took leave of his mother one day, saying: "I fear nothing; I am young and strong; I am as brave as my father was before me; and if I see this creature called man—well—he shall see me!"

He departed. The first day he perceived an ox in his road. "Are you man?" he asked.

"No," replied the peaceful creature, chewing his cud; "he of whom you speak is my master; he yokes me to the plow, and if I move too slowly for him he urges me on with a steel point with which he probes my flesh. It is called a goad, I believe."

The young lion walked off pensively. The next day he saw a horse hobbled in a field. "Are you man?" asked the fierce traveler.

"O no, my lord," cried the trembling horse. "I am his servant; I carry him on my back. When I do not go at the speed he desires he belabors my flanks with a sort of star-shaped wheel covered with pointed blades."

Shaking his mane fiercely, the young lion resumed his course, gnashing his teeth and asking himself, in impotent rage, who this being could be who made all things submit to his caprice, his force, his will!

A short time after that he met an animal of enormous size who seemed gifted with indomitable strength. "This time I cannot be mistaken," he said, approaching it. "You are man, are you not?"

"You are indeed wrong. I'm an elephant, and he whose name you have just spoken is my lord and master. I carry him on my back when he hunts the tiger."

On hearing these words the young lion hurried on, more and more perplexed.

Suddenly a hollow sound, occurring at regular intervals, startled him from his reverie. The noise seemed to come from the depth of the wood. He

advanced and saw a great oak tree, in a clearing, tottering to the ground, felled by an instrument in the hands of a being whom the lion did not at first even notice. Addressing himself to the tree he asked: "Are you man?"

"No," replied the giant oak, sinking slowly down; "I am dying of the blows his hands have rained upon me."

Then for the first time the lion deigned to look at the being of whom the oak had spoken. But at the sight of a creature so paltry and frail he roared disdainfully: "How can this be! Is it you my mother fears so, and of whom she warned me? Was it one of you who dared approach my father? Is it you from whom they have told me to flee?"

"It is I," replied the woodsman, simply.

"But, you poor creature, you are feebleness itself! My name alone should make you pale with fear, and I could bring you to earth with one blow of my paw!"

Not deigning to respond at first, the man cut a deep gash in the trunk of the dying tree, and turning to the young lion said: "I seem feeble to you. Look at this oak tree, straight and tall, and full of pride in its mighty strength; nevertheless it is felled to the earth. It is not my feeble muscle with which I conquer you; it is mind! That

makes me your master! You doubt it still? Put your paw in that groove, if you dare," he added, pointing to the crack he held open with his ax.

At the words "if you dare," the young lion obeyed without hesitation. The woodsman tore away his ax, still wet with the sap of the tree; and the great beast was a prisoner.

"Well—and now; am I man?" asked the woodsman, gravely. "Am I your master?"

Crushed by such boldness, the lion bent his head in silence to acknowledge his defeat. As soon as he was liberated he stretched himself on the moss and began, sorrowfully, to lick his bleeding paw. The man bent over the vanquished beast and bathed the wound carefully, then went on his way, his ax swung over his shoulder, without saying a word or even turning his head.

The lion followed him with his eyes until he was lost to sight. Filled with shame, his confidence in his power and courage shaken, two great tears dimmed his eyes, and raising himself wearily he made his way slowly back to the desert. "From that day," says the old legend, "a lion has known it is useless to attack a brave man."

But man's supremacy over the universe was lost by his sin, and he is only slowly winning it back as he is escaping from the cruel bondage of

iniquity, which made him first a coward and has held him since a slave.

The first result of Adam's sin was that it made him fear to meet God. Before that he had talked with God face to face. His supreme joy was in the perfect freedom and welcome which he felt in the divine presence. He had done always those things which were pleasing to God, and he rejoiced in the sunshine of God's pleasure. But the moment he has sinned against God he begins, cowardly, to hide himself—an indication of the un-wisdom which comes to us through sin, as God was the only One who could forgive him, and thus bring peace to his heart. The wise thing would have been for Adam to go searching after God, crying aloud through the trees of the garden, "My God, I have sinned against thee! Where art thou?" But his sin drives him into doing just the opposite of that. He foolishly tries to hide himself from God, hoping to escape the results of his sin. And so it is not Adam seeking after God, but it is God who searches after Adam, and calls aloud, "Adam, where art thou?"

Are there any here who are trying to hide from God? Your sins have made you a coward—you dare not lift your shamed eyes into the light of his face—so you are seeking to cover up your



transgressions and find some escape from your misery in that way. But there is no escape by covering up sin. David found sin thus covered to be like "a fire in his bones," and many a modern sinner finds himself a smothered volcano of burning conscience, which he vainly tries to crush out. We cannot escape from the law of God; neither can we escape from his questioning. David thought this matter all out, and said: "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

I think many people do not appreciate that the very worst thing sin ever does for us is to bring



about this separation of the soul from God. Adam no longer enjoyed the presence of God. Instead of the feeling of a son for his father, he became a vagabond in feeling before a word had been said to him by way of punishment of his sin. Sin carries with it the pledge of its own punishment. The real vagabondage of sin begins the moment it is committed, in the sense of separation from God. The deepest sinners, and those who are in the greatest danger of eternal disaster, are not always those whose sins bring them under the shame and disgrace of their fellow-men. Surely the New Testament idea of it, as set forth by Christ himself, is that the worst sinner in the world is the intelligent and, it may be, refined and cultured man or woman who lives without God, and whose life of indifference and selfishness is a perpetual defiance to God. Christ said that the publican and the harlot were more likely to press into the kingdom of God and be saved than these self-sufficient people who have washed the outside of the platter but whose hearts give him no love and no devotion. Think for a moment what that means: that the drunkard, or the outbreaking and disgraced sinner whose name is pilloried by social condemnation, is more likely to be saved than some man, like yourself, who lives prudently and carefully so far as

the ordinary requirements of society are concerned, but lives prayerless and selfish, refusing to give to God affection and service; that a poor, lost woman of the street has more chance of salvation than many a woman who would draw back her skirts from the contamination of her touch, but who sins against light and intelligence and hardens her heart against the wealth of God's love poured into her home and her life.

Dr. Horton says that the position of such people is the same as that of Lucifer, son of the morning, who fell from heaven because he was to himself a god. Such a man is the supreme sinner against God. And the awful fact is that such sinners are so common in our day, and so difficult to reach with the plain and simple truth of God's word. I long to do my whole duty by any of you so situated who hear me at this hour. I do not bring against you any railing accusation. I do not speak in the spirit of accusation, but with a brother's hand draw aside the fig-leaf apron of excuses you are making, and seek, for your soul's sake, to show you the nakedness of your sin before God. You have not lifted your club against your brother, like Cain; you have not fallen into drunkenness, like Noah; nor lost the glory of your strength through lust, like Samson; but, like Adam, you

have yielded to the seductive temptations of a sin that has separated you from God. You may still say your prayers, but they have lost their meaning. There is in them no conscious approach of your soul toward God in loving confidence and trust. In your better moments, when conscience has the right of way, you know yourself for what you are—a sinner shrinking from the condemnation impending because of transgression.

There is just one hope, and that is to stop hiding and come back, in the name of Jesus Christ, to the God against whom you have sinned. None plead his name in vain, and no other name has power to cancel your debt; “for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” And we have the promise that, “if we confess our sins,” instead of covering them, “he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The way of confession is the way of salvation.

A young civil engineer of western Kentucky, who assisted his father in his business of railroad prospecting and surveying, had contracted intemperate habits. His work from place to place threw him into the society of loose men much more than his father seemed to be aware of, and being a generous, convivial fellow, he paid for his popularity by copying their indulgences.

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His dangerous appetite and his occasional fits of dissipation were so shrewdly concealed that his parents were kept in ignorance of them for two years—until he was twenty years old. They were worthy people and constant churchgoers, the father being choir leader and the mother a soprano singer.

Once, while the young man was employed on a section of road forty miles from home, it became necessary to "lie over" from Thursday noon till Monday. His father would be detained till Saturday, reaching home in time for the choir rehearsal, but the son returned at once and went to a liquor saloon to commence a three days' "spree."

The saloon keeper understood his case too well, and kept him hidden in his own apartments. When his father returned, expecting to find the boy at home, a surprise awaited him. Trouble began when the question, "Where's Harry?" informed the startled mother that he was missing.

For the Sunday evening service she was to sing a solo, and by special request—because she sang it so well—her selection was to be the hymn, "Where Is My Wandering Boy?"

It seemed to her impossible to perform her promise under the circumstances; and when, on Sunday morning, a policeman found Harry, the certainty was no more comforting than the suspense

had been; but she was advised that he would be "all right to-morrow morning," and that she would better not see him until he "sobered up."

Toward night Harry began to come to himself. His father had hired a man to stay with him and see to his recovery, and when he learned that his mother had been told of his plight, the information cut him to the heart and helped to sober him.

When the bells rang he announced his determination to go to church. He knew nothing of the evening program. He was still in his working clothes, but no reasoning could dissuade him, and his attendant, after making him as presentable as possible, went with him to the service.

Entering early by a side door, they found seats in a secluded corner, but not far from the pulpit and the organ. The house filled, and after the usual succession of prayer, anthem, and sermon the time for the solo came. It was probably the first time in that church that a mother had ever sung out of her own soul's distress:

"Oh, where is my wandering boy to-night,  
The child of my love and care?"

Every word was to her own heart a cruel stab. The great audience caught the feeling of the song, but there was one heart as near to breaking as her own. She sung the last stanza,

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“Go for my wandering boy to-night,  
Go search for him where you will,  
But bring him to me with all his blight,  
And tell him I love him still.  
Oh, where is my wandering boy?”

Just then a young man in a woolen shirt and corduroy trousers and jacket made his way down the aisle to the choir stairs with outstretched arms, and, sobbing like a child, exclaimed, “Here I am, mother!”

The mother ran down the steps and folded him in her arms. The astonished organist, quick to take in the meaning of the scene, pulled out all his stops and played “Old Hundred”—“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.” The congregation, with their hundreds of voices, joined in the great doxology, while the father, the pastor, and the friends of the returned prodigal stood by him with moist eyes and welcoming hands.

The wayward boy ended his wanderings then and there. That moment was a consecration and the beginning of a life of sobriety and Christian usefulness.

Some wanderers may be here to-night. Will you not openly confess Christ as your Saviour? To-day is the day of salvation!

## CHAPTER III

## THE SINNER CROSS-EXAMINED

Why is thy countenance fallen?—*Genesis* iv, 6.

GOD is the great Questioner. He alone in all the universe has at once the right and the power to interrogate every intelligent soul to the very depths of its thought and being. Every man entering upon any course of conduct should take into consideration the fact that it will not go unquestioned. He may defy or elude the questioning of his fellow-men, but he cannot put aside the heart-searching inquiries that will come from God. Adam hid in the garden of Eden and sought to shelter himself from the discovery of his sin, but through the trees of his despoiled paradise there came the ringing question, "Adam, where art thou?" The question was personal, and he had no trouble in finding out who was intended. When Elijah had fled away in cowardice from the wrath of Jezebel, and had for a time forgotten his mission and his work, hiding in the cave in the mountains, the voice of Him who had called him to be a



prophet sought him out with the probing question: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" That was a question which could not be put aside, and which had to be answered. When Paul was on his way to Damascus, full of hate and bigotry, and was suddenly surrounded and overwhelmed by the glare of that light in which the noonday glory seemed insignificant, he was met by the appeal from the crucified but now risen Christ, "Why persecutest thou me?" Paul had authority—reaching to dungeon and rack and cross—over the disciples of Jesus, but the Christ himself he could not put aside, and his question had to be answered. Cain was no exception to this rule. He had, at the point where our text occurs, done no overt act of enmity against his brother. He had lifted no club to strike him, and doubtless in his heart no purpose had yet formed to destroy the life of Abel. But God, who sees and judges the thoughts of men, beholds the falling countenance and the bitter envy that is behind it, and faces Cain with a question that goes to the root of his sin when he asks: "Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?"

Depend upon it, we shall, each of us, have to meet the same kind of questionings. We are not our own. We do not belong to a lawless world.



We are not the children of chaos. We are the creation of infinite wisdom and love, capable of lofty deeds, and we cannot recklessly throw away our splendid inheritance, dragging ourselves in the gutter of moral and spiritual bankruptcy, without facing heart-searching questions from the very throne of God. How merciful it is that the path to ruin is thus made thorny and hard! We quote the proverb, "The way of the transgressor is hard," many times with a tone of regret, as though it were a hard saying and an undesirable fact, but there is nothing which more plainly shows the love and merciful provision of God. We should be grateful that it is not easy to do wrong and keep on doing it. As Christ said to Paul, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," so God has set many a pricking thorn in the path that leads away from peace into the darkness of sin. Happy are they who regard these merciful warnings!

The fact that Abel's sacrifice was accepted while Cain's was rejected is by no means proof that Abel was a pet of the divine heart while there was prejudice against Cain. While the sacrifices seem similar in many ways, the spirit of the two men made them as different as light and darkness. Cain brought his offering, as a matter of form or ceremony, out of a bad and wicked life. His

heart and conduct were alike evil. He did not bring his offering in the spirit of the poor publican, who smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but rather as a matter of religious display. As Joseph Parker says, Cain was the sort of a churchgoer who could go to church and make his offering and then be in a spirit to kill his brother as soon as church was over. I fear we have much of that sort of churchgoing yet; men who attend the public worship, unite in its songs of praise, giving outward deference, as Cain did, to the worship of God, who yet go away to politics or business or social engagements on Monday with nothing in their spirit or conduct to indicate that their character has in any way been affected by the Sunday's service. To join in public worship on Sunday and go from that to cheat in business, or lie in politics, or be revengeful in social life on week days, is to reincarnate the spirit of Cain in modern life.

Abel's worship was very different. He was a good man not alone on days of sacrifice offering, but on all days of the week. He came to the worship in humility, bringing the very best of his flocks as a sacrifice for his sins. The man who brings only formal service to God does not bring the best, but the poorest, of all his possessions.

Abel brought the best he had in a grateful and loving spirit. Cain, in a spirit of vulgar display, brought the poorest he had, with a greedy, selfish heart behind it.

We ought not to count it such a hard thing to give God our love and affection, for from our babyhood it has been the only gold that would pass in the highest exchange. What true mother would compare for a moment the most insignificant gift which came from a child obedient and loving with the rich gift of another that was flung with contempt from a wicked, willful heart? I recently saw a company of children out gathering wild flowers, when suddenly one of the little flock proposed that each of them should gather a bouquet for mother. They set about it with a will. The older children brought home very respectable bouquets, made up of a diversity of flowers, and they were received with smiles of appreciation, for love was in them all; but the baby had plucked a few ragged pieces of clover that had seen their best days, and now and then a weed that his chubby fingers could break, and brought the ugly little bunch of half-withered plants, with a smile of heavenly innocence and love that illuminated his beaming face, exclaiming, "Baby gathered the f'owers for muvver!" And I noticed that, while

all the bouquets were received and cared for, those the mother seemed to appreciate most and treasure longest the bady's faded clover and worthless weeds. He had brought the very best he could. No wonder that God, who made a father's and a mother's love, and whose heart is the center of every perfect feeling of sympathetic relationship, rejoices in him who brings his offerings with the loving spirit of a son.

Cain's spirit is evidenced by the effect produced upon him by the divine refusal to accept his offering and the appreciation of Abel's sacrifice. He was not wounded at the heart because his own offering did not please God; he was too selfishly indifferent to the divine favor for that; but the thing that rankled in his bosom was that Abel was marked for approval, while he, the pretentious and self-sufficient Cain, was discounted. This was the cause of his anger, and this it was that made his countenance fall into the ugliness of envy and hate.

How tenderly God reasoned with him, reminding him that the path of religious prosperity and happiness was as wide open to him as it was to Abel, and that if he would turn over a new leaf and begin to do well, bringing his offering out of a good heart and in a right spirit, he, too, would be accepted. But the other alternative was put just

as clearly: that if he continued to do wrong, and nurtured in his heart the envious, revengeful spirit which now possessed him, still greater sin waited at the door in the near future.

The word translated in our version "lieth" is a very strong, vital word, which is well translated "coucheth" in the revised version. There it reads: "Sin coucheth at the door." So Cain did not go on to do murder without warning. If at the voice of God he had turned about then, with sincere repentance, how different would have been the story! But he brooded over Abel's happiness and success until they seemed to be the cause of the sharp prodings of his own wicked conscience. So, when at last, in a sudden outburst of passion, he rose up and slew his brother, his awful sin was the wild beast which God had warned him was couching at the door of the envy and anger which he cherished on the day his sacrifice was rejected.

I doubt not this is just the earnest, heart-searching message needed by some of you who are listening to me. Your sin is in its beginning; it has not yet entered upon the open, outbreaking, disgraceful epoch of its history. It is as yet an evil picture in the imagination, only the shadow of a purpose that haunts you like a specter in your worst hours. In your better moods you thrust it aside for the

devil that it is, and will not admit it to be a possibility. But it returns again and again, and every time the temptation has added force. There is a demonlike attraction in sin. While we revolt against it and look back upon it with remorse, yet every time it is yielded to, or even considered in the secret chambers of the imagination as a possibility, it lures the soul with ever-increasing, magnetic force. The only wise course is to thrust the sin aside at first, by the help of God. He is as willing to give us power to rule over it and put it under our feet as he was to give power to Cain, who rejected the divine aid, or to Abel, who accepted it.

It seems to me no more bitter ingredient can enter into the poisoned cup of sin, which the unrepenting sinner is forced to drink down to the dregs, than the conviction that the final disaster which overthrew the life was a wild beast which the sinner himself chained at his door and fattened for his own destruction. You could hardly believe the story of the folly of a man who would chain a fierce, bloodthirsty tiger at his own door, ready to tear him in pieces when he should pass out from his home; and yet God says in this warning to Cain that that is exactly what a man does who persists in purposing and doing evil: he is chain-

ing at the door of to-morrow or the day after a still greater sin, which will rend him in pieces. His greed and selfishness and envious anger seemed to Cain, no doubt, very harmless kinds of sins, as they doubtless seem to some of you. He did not see that lying at the door, only a few days away, was murder, with its haggard face and assassin-like fingers. Would to God I had the power to stand before any man or woman here who has a rotten spot of self-indulgence, or greed, or rankling envy, growing in the soul, and could open your eyes to show you at the door of the future the horrid sin into which this will grow, and the possible shame and ruin to which it may bring your unhappy soul! If I could do that, there would be many who would turn this very hour from a life of evil to a life of doing well.

Remember, God does not ask impossible things of us. In its great essentials the Christian life is a very simple thing. It is to cease to do evil and begin to do well, and that not in your own strength. Pardon waits for you if, with the humility and simple-heartedness of Abel, you will turn away from your sin and accept the divine aid for a pure and upright life. You do not need to bring the firstling of the flock to be slain upon an earthly altar, for Christ has become "the Lamb of God that



taketh away the sin of the world." His blood has made atonement for you. You can bring the best you have: your open confession, your humble service, your loving obedience. Such a decision would turn many a Cain-life, with its approaching doom, into an Abel-life, brightening in the smile of God, which illuminates a path that will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.



## CHAPTER IV

NOAH, AND THE TRAGIC STORY OF THE MEN  
WHO BUILT THE ARK

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark.—*Genesis* vi, 13, 14.

And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.—*Genesis* vii, 1.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark.—*Genesis* vii, 7.

And the Lord shut him in.—*Genesis* vii, 16.

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.—*Genesis* vii, 23.

THE warnings of the Bible are as full of mercy as its invitations and its promises. God always deals righteously with his children. The way of sin is made hard, and dark, and full of forebodings, while the "path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Men do not come to the end of a sinful way without being warned of the result. Men who do not like the wages of sin that they are receiving must remember that God has declared plainly in his word that "the wages of sin is death." When God had determined on the destruction of the world by the flood he gave notice of it for a hundred and twenty years. Noah was his preacher of righteousness, and there was abundant opportunity for repentance and salvation. If the people of the antediluvian world had heard the message of Noah with the earnest care given to the message of Jonah by the wicked people of Nineveh, there can be no doubt that the destructive flood never would have occurred. The penitent prayer of the people would have turned aside the sentence of doom.

Noah is usually supposed to have been a very unsuccessful preacher, and yet we must not make little of the fact that he saved the people who knew him best. His wife, his sons, and their families, all came with him into the ark. He did better than Lot, for he was not able to take his wife with him, and lost a great share of his own family. There is something genuine about a man's religion when he wins to firm faith in God all the people of his own household. It must have been a great sorrow to Noah that he was not able to win his

acquaintances, especially the hundreds, and possibly thousands, who must have wrought under his direction in constructing the great ark which God had commanded him to build. It is well for us to reflect that God expects every one of us who have named the name of Christ to be a preacher of righteousness. First of all, we are to be such evangelists in our own homes. It is a terrible thing for Christians to be indifferent or careless about the conversion of their own children. If the children are to grow up prayerful, and reverent, and spiritual, they must become so very largely through the fidelity of the parents. Dr. Norman Macleod says that he shall never forget the impression made upon him, during the first year of his ministry, by a mechanic whom he had visited and on whom he had urged the paramount duty of family prayer. Months passed away, when one day this same mechanic entered his study, bursting into tears as he said: "You remember that girl, sir? She was my only child. She died suddenly this morning. She has gone, I hope, to God; but, if so, she can tell him, what now breaks my heart, that she never heard a prayer in her father's house or from her father's lips! O, that she were with me but for one day again!" Let us not plant thorns in our pillows for after years by living worldly,

prayerless lives in the presence of those who have a right to look to us for guidance and example.

Outside our own households there are those that come in close contact with us in a business or social way to whom we may be the preacher of righteousness more effectively than anybody else. A minister preaching in a strange place had laid emphasis on the fact that every Christian, however humble, or poor, or busy, can do some personal work for Christ if he be only willing. After the lecture a poor woman rushed up to him and said, half indignantly:

"What can I do? I am a poor widow with five children to support, and I have to work night and day to take care of my family. How can I find time to go and speak to anyone about Christ?"

"Does the milkman call at your house early in the morning?"

"Of course he does."

"Does the baker follow him?"

"Why, yes, to be sure he does."

"Does the butcher once or twice a week visit you?"

"Yes," was the curt reply, and the woman, her face flushed with excitement and apparent vexation, flew away.

Two years after the same minister spoke in the

same place. After the service a woman asked him:

"Do you know me?"

"No."

"Well, I am the person who was vexed with you, two years ago, when you asked me whether the milkman and baker and butcher visited me. But I went home to think and pray, and God helped me to do my duty. I now have to tell you that, through my humble efforts, five persons have been led to the Saviour, and they are all consistent working members of the church."

Professional men often have opportunities such as never come to a preacher in the pulpit to carry heaven's message of mercy to a needy soul. Dr. J. M. Buckley relates an incident, which recently occurred in New York city, which shows how such opportunities come sometimes to physicians. A young woman of keenest intellect, highly accomplished, had all her life sat under the teaching of so-called liberal ministers who have nothing to say except that evangelical Christianity is an outworn superstition. She accepted their views, that Christ was a mere man and that a future life is probable, but not certain. She lived on in this way until there came a day when she was taken ill. At first there was no occasion for alarm, yet she became

strangely weak as one day followed another. Her physicians were baffled and her devoted parents terrified. Conscious of the changes, and affected by the anxiety of others which it was impossible for them to conceal, the pastor who had lulled her to sleep with his skepticism concerning experimental religion called to converse with her about a musical performance which he had attended and which he much regretted that she could not have enjoyed. Suddenly she said to him: "I believe that I shall die. Cannot you tell me something to help me meet my fate?" All her blind guide could say to her was: "This is the time to test your philosophy; we must all die; everyone that ever lived has had to pass through the same valley. It is as natural to die as to live. Be courageous; be strong." There was no response from her, but gathering from his remarks that her apprehensions were just, a deep horror settled upon her face, and she said, "Where shall I go?" "That," said he, "no one knows; we can form no idea of that except by dying." Now the young lady's physician was a Christian, and as he saw the nameless dread in her countenance, he thought within himself: "Have I nothing to say? Can I see her drift unhelped to meet her fate?" And, swayed by an impulse which stimulated his memory, he whispered to her the

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beautiful prayers and words of promise which had often fallen upon his ears, watching her as one might watch the effect of a cordial upon the fainting. Her eye brightened a little, but not till he came to the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," and, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," did she speak; then she pressed his hand and said, "Doctor, I thank you; I will trust that." What an opportunity for that physician! How well worth a lifetime of work the privilege of that one deed of Christian love!

If we could only realize the vast treasure at stake, how much more enthusiasm and devotion we should put into our search after immortal souls and into our efforts to win them from sin. If we would only give ourselves to saving souls with even the enthusiasm that men use about far less important worldly matters, great results would speedily be shown. A London literary man who is seeking after rare books and manuscripts happened to enter a little tobacconist's shop, in the East End of London, in order to ask his way to a street in the neighborhood. He was just addressing his request to the elderly Jewess who was in charge of the



establishment, when he saw, to his horror, that she was tearing the pages from a black letter volume which lay on her lap, in order to wrap therein a few ounces of tobacco which she was weighing out in readiness for her customers. He snatched the volume from her hand in a frenzy of apprehension, and found that it was *The Good Huswife's Jewell*, a very rare collection of recipes published in the reign of Elizabeth. With admirable presence of mind he offered a shilling for the book, and the offer was eagerly accepted. Three leaves were missing, and the tobacconist, who explained that she had bought the treasure from a peddler of waste paper, fortunately remembered the names of the customers who had carried them off wrapped round their tobacco. The literary man followed up each leaf until he found it. The fly leaf had a narrow escape, as the laboring man into whose possession it had fallen had already twisted it to make a lighter for his pipe, and was reaching it toward the fire when the gentleman entered his humble home. *The Good Huswife's Jewell* is now complete, and its rescuer from oblivion is said to be one of the happiest men in London.

Surely the follower of Jesus Christ, who has come to know in his own heart the power of Christ to forgive sins, ought to seek for immortal souls



that are perishing in ignorance and sin with as much enthusiasm and earnestness as is shown by a searcher after rare books; and yet such a passion for souls on the part of every Christian in this church would revolutionize the city and cause the people to say of us, as was said of Paul and his friends when they came to Ephesus, "They that turn the world upside down have come hither."

And yet, despite all we can do, some will refuse to heed the Gospel; and in the presence of good example, and the salvation of others, will go on in sin and be lost. It seems very strange to us that the very men who lived in Noah's community, who saw his pure and righteous life, who heard his witness to the warning which God had given, who even worked for him in building the ark, should yet have failed to turn to God in repentance and seek their own salvation. Yet, before we condemn these as the greatest sinners in the world, it is well to ask if people are not doing the same thing to-day. These men had been preached to, but so have you. Some of you who hear this word to-night have attended public worship, more or less frequently, all your lives. You have heard many a sermon which had in it sufficient Gospel truth to make you know your sin and to point out Christ as your Saviour. It will not be possible for

you to stand up at last and say, "I might have been saved, but nobody honestly preached me the Gospel." You have heard the Gospel again and again, and you must give an account for it.

These people had been prayed for. Noah was a man of the type of Abraham, who, wherever he went, built an altar unto the Lord. They must have known that they were the objects of Noah's prayers, and yet they hardened their hearts against them, and would not accept Noah's God. Who of you has not been the object of earnest and sincere prayer on the part of Christian people? Some of you have been prayed for by a Christian father, or mother, and by those who are nearest to you in love and sympathy; and in answer to their prayers the Holy Spirit has again and again striven with your heart, and yet you have resisted him. These prayers you must give an account for.

Again, these people, many of them, had worked for and with a thoroughly good man. They had seen the Gospel in its strongest presentation—incarnated in the life of an honest, sincere man. But have you never known any Christians? There may be times when you are ready to sneer and be cynical about the conduct of some church members, yet there is not one of you but has known some earnest, faithful souls whose transfigured lives

have put your own life under condemnation, and you have said in your inmost soul, "O that I were as genuine and holy in my motives and purposes and life as that man, or that woman!" You must give an account for the testimony of such lives.

And the reasons that kept these people from accepting Noah's message were, no doubt, the same sort of reasons that are keeping some of you from salvation. A great many were kept from joining Noah in a life of prayer because of the delight which they took in worldly things. The present life of the passions and the appetites was so near and so noisy that they gave themselves up to it and silenced the voice of conscience, which sought to tell them of the demands of the higher life of the soul. Is that not your trouble? You will not be smitten down by the paw of a lion, but your soul will be eaten up of moths. In eating and drinking, in the temporary things of life, you fritter away your interest and refuse to give ear to your soul, that hungers for worship and faith and a life of noble self-denial.

No doubt then, as now, procrastination was the cause of the destruction of many. The danger did not seem to be immediate, and so they postponed preparation. "Time enough yet," they said, until the last day of the hundred and twenty years

had passed, and Noah, and every man and woman he could persuade to go with him, had gone into the ark, where the Lord shut him in, and they were shut out. Will you make that fatal mistake? You are in the same current. You are putting off your return to God. You are putting off the question of your conversion, of your immortal salvation, to some indefinite time in the future. Do not, I beg you, continue in so unwise a course. Every day of procrastination makes it easier to continue on the fatal way. Rouse yourself now to hear the word of wisdom! "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The door will not always stand open. You are in danger of its being shut at any time. Enter in while it is still ajar, with welcome and mercy for you.

## CHAPTER V

NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS—THE PERIL OF THE  
WINEGLASS

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.—*Genesis ix, 20-21.*

WE hear a great deal about the temptations of youth, and not much about the temptations that beset middle-aged people and those who are still farther along in the way of their life history. Yet every little while we hear of some man who has lived through youth and early manhood uprightly, with good habits, winning respect and honor on all sides, but who as he has grown older seems to have lost the pressure of restraint which once held him in check from evil ways, and shocks and astonishes the community by falling into outbreaking and disgraceful sin. It is not unfrequently the case that such disaster is connected with the sin of drunkenness. I have myself known more than one man who reached the age of fifty years a total abstainer, and then, presuming on the power of

will to resist undue seduction from strong drink, and persuaded perhaps in his own mind to believe that some stimulant would be valuable for his health, has been led to begin a course of moderate drinking which has ended in a few years in drunkenness and debauch. Noah seems to have been a case of that sort. All his early life was pure and strong. He was a man of upright conversation and of wholesome and noble conduct. He pleased God and was a preacher of righteousness for a hundred and twenty years. And yet, after God's signal interposition in his behalf in the preparation of the ark for his salvation, when once again the world is before him, with the rainbow of mercy and promise spanning the heavens above him, he falls under the temptation of the winecup and is seen in a drunken debauch which shames his family and ends in the most serious consequences to some that are dear to him. The truth is that the only safe course for young or old is total abstinence from strong drink. The glass of water may not bring so suddenly the sparkle to the eye and the color to the cheek as does the glass of wine, but, on the other hand, it never brings down a man's gray hairs in disgrace to a dishonored grave. Ella Wheeler Wilcox sings a tale of a debate between these two glasses:

"There sat two glasses, filled to the brim,  
On a rich man's table, rim to rim;  
One was ruddy, and red as blood,  
And one was clear as the crystal flood.

"Said the glass of wine to his paler brother,  
'Let us tell tales of the past to each other.  
I can tell of banquet, and revel, and mirth,  
Where I was king, for I ruled in might,  
And the proudest and grandest souls on earth  
Fell under my touch as though struck with blight.  
From the heads of kings I have torn the crown;  
From the height of fame I have torn men down;  
I have blighted many an honored name;  
I have taken virtue and given shame;  
I have tempted youth with a sip, a taste,  
Which has made his future a barren waste.  
Far greater than any king am I,  
Or than any army beneath the sky;  
I have made the arm of the driver fail  
And sent the train from the iron rail;  
I have made good ships go down at sea,  
And the shrieks of the lost were sweet to me;  
For they said, "Behold, how great you be!  
Fame, strength, wealth, genius, before you fall,  
And your might and power are over all."  
Ho! ho! pale brother,' laughed the wine,  
'Can you boast of deeds as great as mine?"

"Said the water glass: 'I cannot boast  
Of a king dethroned, or a murdered host;  
But I can tell of hearts that were sad  
By my crystal drops made light and glad;  
Of thirst that I've quenched, and brows I have laved;  
Of hands I have cooled, and souls I have saved.



I have leaped through the valley, dashed down the mountain,

Slept in the sunshine, and dripped from the fountain;  
I have burst my cloud fetters and dropped from the sky,  
And everywhere gladdened the landscape and eye.  
I have eased the hot forehead of fever and pain,  
I have made the parched meadows grow fertile with grain;

I can tell of the powerful wheel of the mill  
That ground out the flour and turned at my will;  
I can tell of manhood, debased by you,  
That I have uplifted and crowned anew.  
I cheer, I help, I strengthen and aid,  
I gladden the heart of man and maid;  
I set the chained wine-captive free,  
And all are the better for knowing me.'

"These are the tales they told each other,  
The glass of wine and its paler brother,  
As they sat together, filled to the brim,  
On a rich man's table, rim to rim."

If I speak to any man or woman who is without settled principles of total abstinence from strong drink, I would like to appeal to you as Joshua did at Shechem, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

The war between the United States and Spain has given us many striking illustrations of the peril of strong drink. The American navy, which in the course of a few months has put itself in the leading place among the navies of the world for



gunnery and skill and endurance and courage, superiority of every sort, is the one branch of the United States public service where intoxicating liquors are rigidly prohibited. The fact is that we had been getting ready to do miracles with our navy by over half a century of growing sobriety. In 1831 Congress took an advance step by providing that all in the navy who voluntarily relinquished their regular ration of liquor should be paid six cents a day extra. In 1842 the ration was cut down to one gill, but the alternative of half a pint of wine was added, and if a sailor did not use it, he was allowed three cents a day. The first year of the civil war brought a greatly increased naval force and increased trouble from strong drink. Moral sentiment had progressed, too. In July, 1862, Congress revolutionized the American navy by passing the historic law providing: "That from and after the first day of September, 1862, the spirit ration in the navy of the United States shall forever cease, and thereafter no distilled spirituous liquors shall be admitted on board of vessels of war, except as medical stores, and upon the order and under the control of the medical officers of such vessels, and to be used only for medical purposes. From and after the first day of September next there shall be allowed and paid to each person

in the navy, now entitled to the spirit ration, five cents per day in commutation and lieu thereof, which shall be in addition to the present pay." And since that day there has been no grog in the United States navy. This was the origin of the little couplet:

"They've raised his pay five cents a day  
And stopped his grog forever."

It was these sober men, fed on honest food and drink, that gave them solid muscles and steady nerves and clear heads, whom Cervera undertook to fight with a mob of Spanish drunkards. There never was a better illustration of the result of water pitted against wine, sobriety pitted against drunkenness, in the history of the race. The Spanish officers sought to stimulate the sailors on their splendid modern cruisers by firing them with strong drink. They chose for their attempt at escape the hour on Sunday morning when they knew that the crews of the American ships would be at religious services. And with the command to advance came the order: "Open the stores of wine and brandy." Officers and men drank freely therefrom. The Spanish officers drew their pistols and threatened instant death to the first man who flinched or hesitated in his work. In the stoke

hole, with the mercury at a hundred and twenty degrees, half-drunken officers stood near half-drunken stokers, and the first man who gave way to fatigue and heat and the effect of the liquor was shot in his tracks. On the gun decks the sun beamed down on men whose stomachs were filled with the fiery liquid, and made them half mad. They tore their clothing from off their backs, cursing and shrieking because of the strain and the liquor. Thus nerved with liquor the Spaniards prepared for the desperate struggle. The Americans went from their wholesome breakfast, with no stimulant stronger than water or coffee, followed by their Sunday prayers, and history will ever hold in wonder the result of that great naval duel between sober men and drunkards.

It is greatly to be regretted, and greatly to our discredit as a nation, that the government of the United States has not had as much wisdom in dealing with its soldiers as with its sailors. The establishment of army canteens by the government itself, and the taking of volunteers—who enlisted out of heroic spirit to fight for their country and to uphold the “Star Spangled Banner”—and degrading them to be bartenders, is a disgrace to the nation. There can be no doubt that the army canteens have during the Spanish war caused more

disease and death than the wounds of the enemy. There is abundant testimony that the large death roll in our army camps, where the soldiers have not been in the face of the enemy at all, has been caused in a great degree by strong drink. As an indignant editor has recently said, the army canteen is more dangerous than the battle field. Scars upon the soldier's body are honorable, but the rotting drunkard, manufactured by consent of the government, if not by its active efforts, is a curse that disgraces both the soldier and the government long after war has ceased. It is a dishonor that the United States should betray a mother's, a wife's, or a sister's confidence by upholding a nuisance and a peril which the best citizens are fighting at home with all their strength. It is a shameful thing that the government should consent to protect and forward the canteen, and thus bring temptation and possible ruin to young men who scorn to patronize the saloon at home. Because of these army canteens many soldiers who escaped death in the fever hospital will come back sots.

One does not have to go far for illustrations or warnings of the peril which comes from the drink. It spares neither childhood nor old age. One day, within a week, in New York city, a gray-haired

man sixty-seven years old, a respectable man and fairly well-to-do, stabbed his son, twenty-six years old, to death in the presence of his horror-stricken family, simply because, while under the maddening influence of strong drink, he came home and found his son lying on the father's bed taking a nap. Had he been sober, nothing could have tempted him to do such a deed, but the drink in him made him a murderer. On the same day, in the same city and the same ward, there was found lying in the gutter, reeking with the fumes of liquor, a well-dressed little boy of seven years. He belonged to a good family. He was taken to a hospital, and when the doctors had brought him to, so that he could talk, this little boy, scarcely more than a baby, who had never tasted liquor in his life until that day, said that a saloon keeper had first given him a big drink of beer, and had then given him a glass of "something cold that burned his throat"—which those about his cot in the hospital had no difficulty in recognizing as whisky. The reporter nonchalantly closed his report of the occurrence by saying that no attempt was made to arrest the saloon keeper.

This traffic in strong drink is the horrid blight of our time. John Ruskin says, "Drunkenness is not only the cause of crime, it is crime; and the

encouragement of drunkenness for the sake of profit on the sale of drink is certainly one of the most criminal methods of assassination for money ever adopted by the people of any age or country."

A physician relates that he was standing with a friend in front of a saloon in a neighboring city when a builder of his acquaintance, a man of amiable and excellent character, a first-class workman, full of business, with an interesting family, respected by everybody and bidding fair to be one of the leading men of the city, came up to them and laughingly said:

"Well, I have just done what I never did before in my life."

"What was that?"

"Why, a man has owed me a bill for work for a long time, and I dunned him for the money till I was tired; but a minute ago I caught him out here and asked him for the money. 'Well,' he said, 'I'll pay it to you if you'll step in here and get a drink with me.' 'No,' said I; 'I never drink—never drank in my life.' 'Well,' he replied, 'do as you please; if you won't drink with me, I won't pay your bill, that's all!' But I told him I could not do that. However, finding he would not pay the bill, rather than lose the money I went in and

got the drink." And he laughed at the strange occurrence, as he concluded.

As soon as he had finished the story the doctor's companion, an old, discreet, shrewd man, turned to him, and in a most impressive tone said, "Sir, that was the dearest drink that ever crossed your lips, and the worst bill you ever collected."

Happy would it have been for that man had he taken warning at that word of reproof, for the physician testifies that in less than twelve months that builder had become a confirmed drinker, and in three years died the death of a drunken vagabond.

I wish with all the earnestness of my soul to impress upon both men and women—for one of the saddest features of recent modern life is the increase of drunkenness among society women—that you cannot afford to depend on stimulants to build up temporarily your strength or the sparkle of your conversation. Every bit of added strength or intellectual brilliancy furnished by strong drink is fictitious and curses in the end. My good friend, Dr. Amos R. Wells, says that he once went to see an exhibition of Gustave Doré's pictures. As a boy he had been fascinated with the spirited work of this artist, as he saw it represented in engravings, and he anticipated a rich treat in seeing the



glorious originals. But, alas! though a few of them met his anticipations, and were brilliant indeed, most of them were only immense sheets of dull colors; some of them mere ghosts of pictures peering out of a world of black. Doré did not use properly made colors, and so his paintings scarcely outlasted the life of the artist himself. It is said that the same is true of the widely admired work of the great Hungarian painter, Munkacsy, who painted "Christ Before Pilate," and "Christ on Calvary." He is very fond of the use of bitumen, which imparts exceeding richness to pictures, but must be used with great caution or it will turn the painting black. Munkacsy, however, uses it lavishly, and some of his most valued works are already almost indistinguishable. In working on the greater canvas of human life what multitudes are tempted to drown care, and make life sparkle and seem brighter for an hour, at the risk of ruining the whole beautiful picture! How many there are to-night in prisons and penitentiaries, in insane asylums and hospitals, in cellars and attics, while others are only human drift logs floating on the current as drunken tramps, who began the painting of a life and character with as fair and sweet a promise as is held by any one of us here, but the strong drink mixed with the colors has



changed the canvas that would have been a thing of beauty into a loathsome daub that is fit only for the waste heap.

I do not dare to close without a word of hope and invitation to anyone here who is already under the grip of this evil habit, and who finds that its power has steadily grown upon him until his resolutions to keep away from the drink are broken again and again. I want to say to any such that for the sting of the adder, the bite of the serpent that is in the winecup, there is only one certain cure, and that is in the Christ. Dr. Langmann read a paper not long since, before the New York Academy of Medicine, which has aroused widespread interest. It described the experiments which he has been making with snake poisons, through which he has produced an antidote which, when he has fully developed it, he believes will prove infallible. If his confidence is justified it will be a great blessing to the world, and his name will go down in history as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind. Multitudes in our own country and far greater multitudes in India and other lands would be saved from death every year through such a cure. Everyone who has the misfortune to be bitten by a poisonous snake will resort to it. How much happier the world would

become if men everywhere were as wise in seeking a cure from the deadly venom of sin! But, thank God, there is a cure which is infallible. No matter how terrible the havoc which sin has wrought in the system, God has provided a remedy which is able to bring health and peace. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

## CHAPTER VI

## CAMPING ON THE ROAD TO SODOM

Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.—*Genesis xlii, 12.*

If you want to prove the size of a man you must take a time when he is under pressure. Take a company of men who are at ease, all prosperous and contented, and they may seem to be very much alike; but put the same men under the stress of some great emergency, when you have a chance to prove the mettle that is in them, and you will be astonished to see what diversity there is in the group. One man will prove to be a hero, and another a coward; one will be generous and unselfish, while another will be stingy and mean.

Abraham and Lot, living together as uncle and nephew, seemed very much alike; but when there came to be strife between their herders, and there was a problem on hand to be settled, Abraham looms up large and gracious and noble, while Lot becomes lean and shriveled under our gaze. It was a magnanimous thing for Abraham, the older

man, to offer to Lot his choice of territory when it seemed wise that they should separate their flocks. And if Lot had been of the same moral stature as his uncle, he would have refused to take advantage of Abraham's generosity and have insisted on his great relative having the first choice.

But Lot was essentially a little man. He had a great greed for money. He was religiously inclined, and having been brought up to serve God, and living all his life under the shadow of Abraham's gracious influence, he purposed in a general way to be a good man; but there was a deeper, overshadowing purpose to get rich. Lot's purpose was in harmony with the advice given by the old farmer to his son: "My boy, get rich. Get rich honestly, if you can; but in any event get rich."

Lot looked out over the plain toward Sodom and he saw that it was a very well watered and fertile country, by far the richest pasture land in the entire region. One great drawback to it was that it bordered on Sodom, and Sodom was infamous throughout all the world of that day for its wickedness. To a man who had a family growing up this was no unimportant matter; but it no doubt made a good market for cattle, and Lot reasoned that it was better for him to take the risks of moral degeneration than, as a great cattle raiser, to lose

the beef trade of Sodom. So Lot says, I'll take this valley, and pitch my tent toward Sodom.

Now, it is useless for us to revive this old story of a far-off past unless we apply it to ourselves; for these stories never lose their value, because the great struggles of human nature are always the same. I doubt not that some who are listening to this discourse are at the same place, where the roads diverge, and are tempted to make their camp on the road toward Sodom. Lot found it a bad choice, and so will you. Lot found that the wickedness of Sodom poisoned the air of all the plains; and so do men who thrust themselves into evil associations to-day.

Julia Ward Howe says that some forty years ago, in company with her husband, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, she visited Cuba. Dr. Howe there made the acquaintance of a noble Cuban advanced in age, a teacher who for years had done everything in his power to give to the youth of the country a training in accordance with the progress and spirit of the time. He was closely watched by Spanish officials, but was so beloved and honored by the people that the government was reluctant to interfere with his work. Mrs. Howe one day accompanied her husband to call upon this venerable sage, whose name was Don Pepe della Luz. Dur-

ing the conversation the old man said, "Doctor, what we need here is that air of which you and I were speaking the other day—that air, you know." When they were by themselves she asked her husband what air it was of which Don Pepe was speaking, and he said it was the air of freedom. So there is such a thing as an atmosphere of reverence toward God and of respect for righteousness. While Lot lived with Abraham he enjoyed that sort of an atmosphere. Wherever Abraham went he built an altar to God. Angels were his visitors, and there was an atmosphere of thanksgiving and prayer pervading the life of the home. Compared to such an atmosphere Sodom was hell itself. There was no such thing as prayer, or spiritual song or conversation, in that wicked city. This explains the moral degeneration of many young men and young women who come from home, either on the farm or in some smaller town, to live in the city. They have been accustomed to a religious atmosphere. The Bible has been a respected and loved book among the people with whom they have associated. They have been accustomed to attend public church services, regarding the Sabbath day as sacred, and prayer has been the daily atmosphere of life. They come to the city and are thrown into a different air. They associate with

people who do not pray, who do not read the Bible, and who seldom go to church. It is an air poisoned with irreverence and skepticism of sacred things. If not definitely immoral, it is permeated with the smoke of Sodom and has the smell of Sodom in it. A man who gives himself up to that kind of an atmosphere has pitched his tent on the road to Sodom; he may not have got to Sodom yet, but he is camping on the way, and it is only a question of time before he will have settled down to live in the midst of its godlessness and wickedness.

There is perhaps not an incident in the Bible that more clearly suggests the danger of an evil tendency, a false current, than this story of Lot pitching his tent toward Sodom. If you had asked Lot the next week, or the next year, if he were going to move to Sodom to live, he, no doubt, would have denied it. He would have declared that he had no such intention. Perhaps one of Lot's faults was that he lacked definite moral decision. He was getting ready to go to Sodom all the time, though he did not know it. If you had asked Abraham if he were going to Sodom to live, you would have heard a "No" with such a blunt emphasis about it that you would never have forgotten it. One of the most dangerous things to the building up of a really successful career is the lack of a definite



vital purpose to do a noble thing. It is so in the ordinary business affairs of life. A man without a strong and definite plan is likely to go to the wall and to fail of worthy achievement. Owen Meredith says of one of his characters :

“With irresolute finger he knocked at each one  
Of the doorways of life, and abided in none.  
The man who seeks one thing in life, and but one,  
May hope to achieve it before life be done;  
But he who seeks all things wherever he goes,  
Only reaps from the hopes which around him he sows  
A harvest of barren regrets.”

A popular novelist makes one of her young women ask of a young man :

“ ‘Have you made any plan?’

“ ‘Yes,’ he said, the words coming in jets, with pauses between; ‘I will travel first—I will see the world—then I will find work.’

“She made a little impatient movement and said: ‘That is no plan; “travel, see the world, find work.” If you go into the world aimless, without a definite object, dreaming, dreaming, you will be definitely defeated, bamboozled, knocked this way and that. In the end you will stand with your beautiful life all spent, and nothing to show. They talk of genius—it is nothing but this, that a man knows what he can do best; nothing else. It does not



matter what you choose. Be a farmer, business man, artist—what you will—but know your aim and live for that one thing. We have only one life. The secret of success is concentration: wherever there has been a great life, or a great work, that has gone before. Taste everything a little, look at everything a little, but live for one thing. Anything is possible to a man who knows his end and moves straight for it, and for it alone.’ ”

And this is as true when it comes to the great questions of moral character. You are getting ready to be either a noble man, a holy, saintly woman, or a moral failure. I’m not asking what you are to-night, but on what road are you camping? Abraham went on his way, camping out and living in tents also; but while Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, Abraham pitched his tent toward “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Every day brought each of these men toward the end of his career, and every step took them farther apart. We see men making the same choices now. Two young men come from the same town to build their careers in the city. One goes at once to the church and identifies himself with the Sunday school and the prayer meeting and Christian work. He becomes acquainted with that kind of people. In a business way he may

know many sorts, but he makes his fellowships and friendships among the men and women who worship God and are helping to make the world better. These friendships become like a wall about him. They commit him to a righteous life. They are his tent, which he pitches toward heaven. He is not a saint yet, but his tent is pitched on that road. Every day and every year of such a life brings him farther along the way of robust Christian character.

The other young man, while not intending or purposing to be a wicked man, thinks, perhaps, that he has been brought up too strictly, and now that he is in a new community, without the restraints of home, he can look around a little and see the world. He soon finds that the people who are "seeing the world" are of a different class from those with whom he has been acquainted; there is about them a certain carelessness and dash, a certain freedom from responsibility—yes, a certain recklessness—that fascinates him. The theater, the card table, the wineglass are now, as they always have been, the favorite diversions of people who are "seeing the world." He forms his associations among such people. He is more likely to make friends with the worst of them than the best. He may or may not succeed in his business;

he may or may not advance as a lawyer or doctor; but morally he steadily loses. He loses his keen reverence for the Bible. The prayer meeting and the Sunday school seem slow and heavy to him after the glamour of some play that has been spiced with a dash of wickedness—not enough to make him revolt against it, but just enough to awaken the dare-devil that is in him. He may or may not fall into outbreaching sin that will shame and disgrace him; but the very air he breathes in such association will dull the edge of his moral sensibilities, will cool his ardor for religious conversation, and will surely and steadily draw him onward on the way to Sodom.

Do not doubt that to be on the road to Sodom is to get to Sodom sooner or later, if you do not turn around and go the other way. Lot made a bad trade after all. I do not know just how much wealth he laid up—he may have become very wealthy and have retired into Sodom to live on the interest of his money; but he was finally a loser, for when Sodom was burned up because of its wickedness he lost everything he had and barely escaped with his life. Mortgages on property in Sodom are always a bad investment.

It is a bad thing to go on a path where success will mean failure. One of the saddest things one

ever reads went the rounds a little while ago concerning George Du Maurier, the author of *Trilby*. While he was sick, and on his death bed, a friend referred to the success of *Trilby* as a book and as a play, whereupon Du Maurier sadly replied: "Yes, it has been successful. But the popularity has killed me at last." Many men are destroyed by their own success. Lot succeeded—and lost everything. Du Maurier succeeded, but lost his life; and many men here in Cleveland are succeeding—only to find remorse and ruin at the last.

I would like to say with power to any young man here who is trading the prayer meeting in which he was brought up for the card party or the theater, that, fascinating as the exchange may seem, he is pitching his tent toward Sodom and the end will be disastrous. I want to say to any youth who is choosing his companions from among the irreverent and reckless, because they seem gayer than Christians, that every such friendship is a tent on the road to Sodom. Many a young woman has gone down on the road to Sodom in such a friendship, and married a man who lived there, and afterward found herself dragged into Sodom to her lifelong sorrow. I want to say to every young man, or young woman either, who is beginning to dally with the glass of beer or the bottle of wine,

You are pitching a tent on the way to Sodom, and there are no tents that move so rapidly as on the path of stimulant and intoxication. Have the courage to break up every such camp while you may. The very people who are tempting you will respect you a great deal more for such courage.

When General Clinton B. Fisk was in command of the military district of St. Louis, it became his duty, on one occasion, officially to receive and welcome to that city an eminent major general coming to take command of the military department. General Fisk met his commander on the east side of the river and escorted him to the hotel in which he had engaged a suite of rooms.

As soon as they were within the parlor—at once assuming the place of host, and ready to treat the other officers as his guests—the major general ordered a servant to bring four whisky punches.

“Only three, if you please, General; excuse me,” promptly and courteously spoke General Fisk.

“You’ll not refuse to drink with me, will you?” said the superior officer.

“If I should drink now it would be the first time. You would not advise me to begin now, would you, General?”

“No; God bless you! Long may you wave!” was the gracious and gallant response.

How I would add to the peace of hundreds of young men in this city if I could inspire them to-night to follow that courageous example.

I cannot close without urging upon any who are camping on the way to Sodom to break camp this very hour and turn the other way. True, Lot was saved when Sodom was burned up, but what a salvation! He was saved as by the skin of his teeth. He was plucked as a brand from the burning. He lost his property, he lost his wife and his children, and, old and bankrupt and broken-hearted, he crept out of that horrible desolation. Don't look forward to such a salvation as that; but now, while youth and strength are yours, break up the camp that has its tent door open toward Sodom and pitch your tent with the people of God, who, like Abraham, build an altar of worship wherever they go. Breaking camp is an open matter that everybody can see, and so the more boldly you turn about and confess your sins the happier it will be for you. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." During the last great plague and famine in India, many people brought still greater horrors on themselves because they would hide away the corpses at the back of their hovels. When the dead-cart came around they said there were

no dead in the house, and so the decaying body was left to poison the atmosphere and kill many that would otherwise have escaped. To try to hide our sins or cover them up is like that. They will poison all our lives. "Whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper." It is better to bring our own sins to the light now, and have them forgiven, than to keep them covered up for a time, and have them drag us to judgment and doom after a while.



## CHAPTER VII

THE LADDER OF THE ANGELS, AND THE SINNER  
AT THE FOOT

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it.—*Genesis xxviii, 12, 13.*

SOFT sins lead to hard lodgings. It seemed a sharp, shrewd trick for Jacob to cover his hands and neck and face with the hairy goatskins, and thus deceive his father, who was old and blind, and insure for himself the blessing which belonged by birthright to Esau. But I imagine the trick seemed less cunning that night at Bethel when, tired, worn out with a forty-mile walk, he lay down on the hard ground, and with a harder stone for his pillow slept the heavy slumber of an utterly exhausted man.

Depend upon it, sin does not always wait till the end of the journey to make itself felt. It has way stations of punishment all along the path.

A very subdued looking boy of about thirteen years, with a long scratch on his nose and an air of general dejection, came to his teacher, in one of



the Boston public schools, and handed her a note before taking his seat and becoming deeply absorbed in his books. The note read as follows: "Miss B——: Please excuse James for not being at school yesterday. He played truant, but I guess you don't need to lick him for it, as he and the boy he played truant with fell out and the boy licked him. Also a man they sassed caught him and licked him. The driver of a sled they hung on to licked him. Then his pa licked him, and I had to give him another for sassing me for telling his pa, so you need not lick him until next time. I guess he thinks he had better keep in school hereafter." That boy was doubtless of the opinion of Kipling, who is said to have been present at a discussion participated in by a number of literary men where the question argued was whether there was a God or not. Finally Kipling brought his fist down on the table, ending the discussion with the pertinent sentence, "I know there is somebody somewhere who gives us our licks." No man here who has come toward the years of maturity but has found that there is, back of all life, some intelligence which executes and makes real the edict of the Bible that "the way of the transgressor is hard." Jacob found it so in the old Eastern land where he dwelt, and every sinner in Cleveland is finding it

so now. The sin may be soft enough, but the bed it sends you to is hard.

It may seem a far cry from this opening suggestion to the next that impresses me in our study to-night, but it is this: that heaven is not far away from earth; it is so near that its inhabitants are very much interested in the things that are going on here, and are seeking the welfare of dwellers on the earth. Jesus says that heaven is so close to this world that there is great rejoicing there over any sinner who repents of his sins and turns his feet toward that land. I think Dr. George H. Hepworth is right in his feeling that this nearness of heaven to earth is either ignored or kept silent about a good deal more than is wise. The worst feature of that tender sorrow that bereaves us of our loved ones is the feeling that those dear to us have gone so far away. It is that feeling which breaks the heart and clothes those who are left behind in blackest mourning. If a child out of a family goes across the sea to study in some foreign land the sense of loss is often very keen, and the separation is hard to bear, but those who remain at home are buoyed up with the thought that the young man or young woman is not only alive, but is receiving benefits which could not be obtained at home; and though those who remain are lonely and

grieved, there is mingled with the sorrow something which makes them even proud of the ability to sacrifice themselves for the good of the absent member of the family. If, however, one dies out of the household flock and goes to heaven, the attitude is very different. There is then not only that sense of separation but the added sense of loss. There is usually little or no appreciation of the fact that heaven is a great deal nearer than Europe. The thought of immeasurable distance weighs down the soul into hopeless discouragement. Surely we would be very greatly comforted if we opened our hearts to receive fully the assurances of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, that heaven is so near to earth that there is constant communication, and that our lives are constantly brooded over and visited on tender missions by glorious angels.

We have also suggested here the comforting truth that heaven is full of mercy and sympathy for the sinner. They do not repudiate us because we have been overborne by temptation and have been forced out into exile by our sins. Heaven is not merciful to us only when we deserve it, but when we need it. Jacob was in great need of this revelation of God's mercy and willingness to forgive him and lead him in a new way. He had

made a bad start and was being driven away from home by his sins. There was every reason to fear that he would go straight to ruin; for ruin is always at the end of the sinner's path.

A young man who was converted during some special evangelistic meetings held in a mining village, desirous of doing something for God, bought some tracts. He was distributing these little booklets one day when he met some of his old companions, who derided him as he spoke to them of Jesus.

"Here," said one of the old companions; "can you tell me where hell is?"

After a moment's hesitation the young man looked up and said: "Yes; it's at the end of a Christless life."

And no man is ever in greater danger of taking the short cut to such an end than the young man whose sins have driven him away from home. He finds himself in hard circumstances, without friends, and without the constraint of the public opinion of people who have known him, to hold him up to do his best. Such a young man is tempted to say: "It makes no difference now what I do. Nobody cares; I have made a bad start, and got a bad name at home, and in this new place nobody knows me or cares what becomes of me. I

might as well have my fling." Ah, how many boys have gone to ruin like that!

A man in such a state needs, more than anything else, to come face to face with God and know that God has not given him up, but loves him even now, and is willing to save him. Jacob needed nothing so much as that. No doubt he thought he needed other things more. He wanted a home; he wanted a soft bed and a square meal; he wanted friends, and employment, and a chance to make his way; but, whether he appreciated it or not, what he really needed more than anything else was to meet God.

A little boy came to his father one day and laid his hand upon his knee, looking up wistfully.

"Do you want a penny, child?"

The sweet face glowed and the answer came, "No, papa; only you."

So, my friend, it is not money, nor success, nor fame, nor fashionable pleasures, none of these things that you need most. The supreme need is to find God; to be sure of his love; to be certain that at the top of the ladder of life is God.

What a sinner needs when he has made his failure, and lost all, is a new chance. Jacob by his sins had emptied himself of home, and inheritance, and everything that he counted valuable. Is that not true of some of you? Many times people are

unconscious of being in such a state until their real bankruptcy of soul comes on them as a shock.

There is an old legend about an Egyptian monarch who had his treasure-house built, as he thought, so as to be impregnable against thieves. But in one corner of the wall the architect had built a stone which revolved upon a pivot and could be pushed round, so as to give access, and when dying he left the secret to his sons. So, night after night, the sons crept in and brought away some of the hoarded wealth; and when the king, fancying his coffers to be still full, went in to count his treasures he found that they were nearly all gone. How many are being thus robbed of more important treasures! Where is the innocency which you once knew as a little boy or a little girl? where is the gentle tenderness of heart? where the unselfishness? where the open-handed genuineness of character which was your treasure in your youth? where the simple confidence in God and in his word that made prayer as simple and natural as talking with your parents? Where are these treasures, worth a million times more than any gold or silver? Alas! unseen hands have stolen them away. What you need, then, is what Jacob needed: a new chance; and that is what God gave him, and what he is ready to give you. If I speak to any man here who

is discouraged and disheartened, I want to say "a word in season to him that is weary." No matter if you are past middle age, and have lost what seemed to you to be the best opportunities of life; if you are yet alive God stands the new ladder of the angels down at your feet.

The whole world has recently seen a splendid illustration of what a man can sometimes do to recover lost ground in a business way even after his hair is white. Mark Twain awoke one morning a few years since to find himself utterly ruined financially; a bankrupt; a great many tens of thousands of dollars worse off than nothing. In addition to that, his health was very frail. Many a man in similar circumstances would have sat down to mope out in despair the few years left to him; but the brave-hearted humorist set himself to work, with an energy surpassing that of youth, to retrieve his fortune. He laughed at the people who said to him that he had done his best work. He belted the globe with lectures and writings, until, a little while ago, he is said to have made a dinner for his creditors and laid beside each plate, in lieu of the menu card, a check in full for the balance of his indebtedness. Some one has well said, "That is the best joke Mark Twain ever perpetrated." God gave him a new chance. But God is always doing that



in a spiritual way to men. Jacob had forfeited one chance but God gave him another, and out of his despair there arose before his vision this ladder of the angels, and above them God reminding him that he was the God of his fathers, that he was his God, and that he was ready to guide him and make his life a great and splendid success.

Surely I could bring you no sweeter message than this: You may begin life over again, you may have a new chance, through God's infinite mercy. During a terrific storm, some years ago, a ship was driven far out of her course, and, helpless and disabled, was carried into a strange bay. The water supply gave out, and the crew suffered agonies of thirst yet dared not drink of the salt water in which their vessel floated. In their last extremity they lowered a bucket over the ship's side and in desperation quaffed the beverage they thought was sea water, but, to their joy and amazement, the water was fresh, cool, and life-giving. They were in a fresh-water arm of the sea and they did not know it. They had simply to reach down and accept the new life and strength for which they prayed.

My brother, weary with your sorrow and your sin, discouraged at your failure, throw a bucket over the ship's side and drink the sweet water of God's forgiving love and mercy. Start again. Do



not for a moment imagine that because you have failed once you may not now succeed. Josh Billings once said, "A man who is bitten twice by the same dog is better adapted to that business than any other." The fact that you have had one failure will help you to steer clear of that failure in the future. Take heart, brother! Heaven is not far away, and God bends over you with mercy.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE "SLINGS AND ARROWS" OF AN OUTRAGED  
CONSCIENCE

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.—*Genesis* xlii, 21.

THE memory is one of the most important and marvelous characteristics of the human mind. Each one of us by daily deeds is hanging pictures on the walls of memory that will make of it, in time to come, either a chamber of peace or a dungeon of torture.

There is an old Persian story of a vizier who dedicated one apartment in his palace to be a chamber of memory. In it he kept the memorials of his earlier days, before royal favor had lifted him from his lowly place to a position of honor. It was a little room with bare floor, and here he kept his crook, his wallet, his coarse dress, and his water cruse—the things which had belonged to his shepherd life. Every day he went for an hour from the splendors of his palace into this humble apartment

to live again for a time amid the memories of his happy youth. Very sweet were his recollections, and by this daily visit his heart was kept warm and tender amid all the pomp and show, and all the trial and sorrow, of his public life.

Whether we live in a palace or a tenement house, we have each our chamber of memory, and we are furnishing it after our own designs. Pictures hang there which no eye but God's sees. And these furnishings which are daily enriching it with beautiful things that minister to comfort and peace, or with relics and mementoes of evil that will torture us in times of weakness and age, are our own creation; and we should select them with the greatest care, for when once we have them we cannot escape from them. If a man does not like his house he may move away from it. He can sell it or rent it and move on to another street, where the surroundings suit him better. He may even go to another town or another city to escape unpleasant surroundings. But a man cannot get away from the chamber of his memory in that way. It is like his shadow; it walks with him from street to street, from place to place, from one year into another; lies down with him at night and rises with him in the morning. It has the power to compel his attention when it pleases, and ever and anon it will

set its pictures before him and insure his interest in them.

A man cannot always decide what he will remember. The subject may be unpleasant, and to recall it may shame and humiliate him, but he cannot, because of that, say, "I will not think of it again." We see a signal illustration of this in the text we are considering. Joseph's brethren were a long way from home, in a strange land where they had no knowledge that anyone knew anything about them. But they are suddenly confronted with rough treatment on the part of the ruler before whom they had come begging the privilege to buy corn, in the great stress of famine which was pinching them and their families. Not a word had been said to them about Joseph, and they had perhaps not mentioned his name to each other for a long time. It was no doubt a tabooed subject between them, and it was so sad a subject to Jacob, their father, that there is every reason to suppose that the name of the lost youth was never mentioned in his presence; and yet, although their wicked deed to Joseph was twenty years or more past, when they were threatened with imprisonment and misfortune to every man of them there came up that old picture of the hills of Dothan and the lad with his coat of many colors. Though the seasons of twenty

years had come and gone, it all came back to them as though it were yesterday. They see the delicate, thoughtful boy coming over the hills in the distance with his message from home. They see themselves gathered together again, plotting against him as he comes with childlike trust toward them. All the old envy and jealousy that burned in their vengeful hearts comes back to them now, and seems absurd and wicked and horrible to them as they look back on it from the distance. They hear themselves saying again, “Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.” Ah, what would they not give now to have that dreamer back! They see again the fear and terror on the delicate face of Joseph as they tear off his beautiful coat of many colors and fling him into the pit. And then the Egyptian caravan comes by, and they pull him up out of the pit and sell him for twenty pieces of silver, hardening their hearts against his cries and his anguish at their inhuman treatment. They have not thought of it for a long time, but to every man of them it comes back again as sharp and clear in its outlines as though it had just happened. They see that bloody coat again in their hands, which they had stained with the blood of a slain kid

to deceive the poor old father. They hear again the lie on their lips when they took the bloody, torn garment to Jacob and said: "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." And again they look in the old man's despairing face and hear his heart-broken moan: "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." How could they ever forget that day? Jacob has never seemed like the same man since. And now these men turn one to another, and instead of talking about how they are going to escape, or how they are going to prove that they are not spies, every last man of them is thinking how he is ever going to get rid of that old sin of twenty years ago.

Marvelous is the tenacity of the memory of conscience. Forgetfulness never can be trusted. Things seem to be lost in oblivion, but they are not lost. Isaiah declares that a wicked conscience is like a troubled sea that cannot rest, and the mire and the clay that have been cast into it in years gone by are likely to come up again at any time, and be cast upon the shore only to be washed away by the returning tide and flung into sight again on some other beach a hundred miles away. Sin can never be finally hidden in God's universe, for God has not abandoned his creation and he knows how to

cause a man's sin to find him out. This world is a bad place for secrets. It is a great whispering gallery. Christ said that what men think in their hearts and speak in their closets is yet to be shouted from the housetops. A little old saying, used when we have discovered somebody's secret, is often on our tongue: “A little bird told me.” Like many other sayings and proverbs that have become popular in our common language, it had its source in the Bible. If you will turn to the book of Ecclesiastes you will hear the Wise Man saying: “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter”—a graphic way of setting forth the certainty of sin's discovering itself.

A sinner not only carries the proof of his guilt in his own heart and conscience, but he carries there the court that pronounces sentence. These men did not wait for God's judgment. Their own consciences judged them and condemned them. They said to one another: “We are verily guilty concerning our brother.” Guilt of conscience turns a man against himself. Other witnesses may be all dead, or may have gone out of the country, or may be friendly to us and have no intention of accusing us, but that does not make the sinner safe; for he carries in his own breast the greatest accuser



of all, one that can neither die nor run away, and one who can never be trusted to keep his guilty secret. Quaint old Doctor South says that sin will lie burning and boiling in the sinner's breast like a kind of Vesuvius of fire pent up in the bowels of the earth; which yet must, and will, in spite of all obstacles, force its way out at length; thus, in some cases of sin, the anguish of the mind grows so fierce and intolerable that it finds no rest within itself, but is even ready to burst till it is delivered of the swelling secret it labors with. There are sins which have the same effect on the conscience which some medicines have on the stomach; they are no sooner received than it is in pain and torment till it throws them out again.

No man can properly measure the force, the power, and the remorseless rage of conscience when God commissions it to call the sinner to an account. How strangely it will arouse him in an unexpected hour! How terribly it will wring and torture him, till it has bolted out the hidden guilt of which it was in search! As a game dog will run up and down through the woods hunting out the darkest places, penetrating remote thickets, searching deep cañons until it routs the game for which it was sent and with bellowing drives it to the light, and to the master's gun, so God knows how to arouse con-

science, and send it searching in the darkest corners of forgetfulness, and with the bellowing that sounds like the bell of doom drive sin from its retreat to face the glare of the judgment seat. The conscience is God's hunting dog in the sinner's breast. You cannot turn it aside with bribes of dainty morsels, but, true to its trust, it will steadily bring you to condemnation.

Reason joins with memory in bringing in the verdict against the sinning soul. When memory brought back the picture of that old wrongdoing, conscience made these men say, "We are guilty;" and their reason added, "Therefore is this distress come upon us." We talk sometimes about poetic justice; by that we mean that it is justice peculiarly adequate in punishment to the sin. All God's judgments are poetic, and the sinner himself, when conscience begins its work of judgment, is the first to admit that the judgment is poetic and just. There is a strange case related in the first chapter of Judges of an old man named Adoni-bezek, who lived in the land of Bezek and was a sort of an Ishmaelite of a man in the world of his day. He was a man of great force and power, a bloodthirsty old fellow, who boasted of his genius in inventing means of torture which he administered to the great persons who were captured by him. Finally he ex-

perienced the truth of the word which says that the man who takes the sword shall perish by the sword, and was himself captured, and when he was caught his enemies cut off his thumbs and his great toes; and old Adoni-bezek in the hour of his imprisonment and despair said: "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me."

An aroused conscience not only cannot be thrown off the scent, but it often causes the sinner to flee when no man pursueth. At last these men had gone out with sorrow, leaving Simeon behind in the dungeon. When they made their first camp and opened their sacks they found their money, each man's money in his sack. Now Joseph had done that for love of them, but their guilty consciences made this incident only a link in the chain that seemed to be tightening about them. And the next time they came down to Egypt, when Joseph commanded that they should be brought to his own house and a feast prepared for them, although it was intended as a kindness, yet their guilty consciences made it seem like a threat and drove them wild with terror. And they said one to another, "Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought

in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen.” These men would not now be shrinking in terror for fear of becoming bondmen themselves, if they had not sold Joseph to be a bondman twenty years before.

No wild beast is more merciless and relentless than a guilty conscience. A tiger hunter in India heard his companion, who was sleeping on the veranda, scream out in agony: “Help, for God’s sake! Help! the tiger’s got me! Help! help!” Rushing through the darkness he found that the tiger had stolen in upon his friend without the slightest warning and had seized him by the hand, which he had raised to defend himself, and had commenced to drag him off. In his agony he arose to his feet, and after descending the steps of the bungalow was actually walking off with his hand in the tiger’s mouth, to be devoured, when his friend, by his courage and presence of mind, rescued him from an awful death by stabbing the tiger through the heart. A man who has sinned against his own soul has put his hand in the mouth of a tiger that will drag him to judgment unless it is slain.

The only cure for a guilty conscience is in forgiveness of the sin that caused the guilt. How differently Joseph’s brethren felt after he made himself known to them, and assured them of his for-

giveness. No doubt, when they first knew who he was, they were all the more apprehensive and fearful, for they could see that he had the power to put them all to death for their sin against him. But when, one by one, he embraced them, and assured them of his forgiveness, and asked loving questions about the old home, all the bitter remorse and terror for that sin committed twenty years ago was taken away, and it no longer had the power to make them shrink and shiver and cower with dread. So, when a man is aroused by his conscience to see the horrid character of his sin against God, and to keenly appreciate his guilt, and to know the punishment which naturally belongs to his sin, and to realize that there is no escaping from God's hand, he is at first all the more apprehensive and fearful, and is ready to despair. But when he sees on the face of Christ, his Saviour, a smiling look of forgiveness, and hears his kind words: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," the bitterness is gone and the sting of guilt is taken away, and instead there is the joy and peace of conscious forgiveness. Joseph's kisses sucked all the poison out of that old wound. So the caresses of Jesus Christ suck all the poison from the memory of our sins, and bring to us a peace that passes all understanding and casts out all fear.

## CHAPTER IX

THE THREE MOST NOTORIOUS BAD BARGAINS IN  
HISTORY

Esau despised his birthright.—*Genesis* xxv, 34.

They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.—*Matthew* xxvi, 15.

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—*Mark* viii, 36.

MAN is born a trader. Children begin to bargain with their toys in the nursery. From the very beginning of life to its end, man is seeking to better his condition by exchanging what he has for something else. This bargaining instinct was never more thoroughly developed than in our own time. It is peculiarly a commercial age. All parts of the world are coming under tribute to commerce. Every new island, every additional square mile of territory that comes under the dominion of the flag, is carefully investigated and measured from the trade standpoint by the merchant. In addition, things that used to be thrown away and wasted are becoming articles of commerce under the quickened inventive touch of

modern science. Nothing now is wasted in many of the great departments of food product. A beef steer goes in on one side of a building as a fat steer, and comes out on the other as beefsteaks and leather and buttons and glue and brushes. Nothing is wasted. Everything has gone into bargain. Preach as you will against the bargain counter, it is always the crowded corner of the store. It is an illustration of a deep instinct in humanity.

But man's instinct is to make good bargains and not bad ones, and it is concerning the danger of bad bargains that I wish to speak to you at this time. The most notorious bad bargain that comes to us from the olden time is that of Esau, who sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage. Esau was a hunter. He liked the excitement and freedom of the chase. He liked the uncertainty and the enthusiasm of hunting for big game. No doubt the little tinge of danger there was in it spiced the joy of it for his wild and daring spirit. Many of us know how to sympathize with him in this love for the free and untrammelled and unconventional. One day he came home from the hunt having had bad luck. He had found no game, and was tired out and in low spirits. He found Jacob, his brother, a quiet, shrewd, calculating sort of fellow, making pottage of some sort



of coarse vegetables (lentils perhaps), and he asked for some. Jacob, ready to drive a sharp bargain, said, "Sell me thy birthright." And so Esau, caring nothing for the birthright, having a contempt for it in his heart, sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. The incident closes in the record by the simple statement of our text, "Esau despised his birthright."

The second bad bargain which has attained a like notoriety is the bargain which Judas Iscariot made when he betrayed Jesus Christ to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver. There are a great many conflicting opinions concerning Judas. Some people believe that he was thoroughly bad from the beginning; that he followed Christ and became one of his disciples purely for what he could make out of it, and was always and everywhere a scoundrel. Other people believe that Judas was, like most other folks, both good and bad, and that at first he was an honest follower of Christ, but that his besetting sin was greed. He loved money. He liked to feel its weight heavy in the bag. He liked to see it slip through his fingers as he counted it in little heaps. This grew on him, and as Christ became unpopular, and Judas believed that he would be arrested anyhow, he conceived the brilliant scheme of

making some money out of it and putting himself solid with the government after Christ had been condemned. I do not know which of these is right, but, as I have never found any man without some good qualities in him, I am inclined myself to this latter idea. However it may be, Judas evidently allowed his love for money to overcome his sentiments of gratitude, and deliberately made up his mind to bargain off the liberty of Jesus by betraying him into the hands of his enemies. There is something very repulsive and loathsome in the way he did it. His slipping away from the table at the last supper, where he had broken bread with Christ as one of his dearest friends, and his selecting a kiss of seeming love as the mode of betrayal, have stamped the transaction as one of the basest and most treacherous betrayals in the history of mankind.

Now, the point I wish specially to bring to your thought in regard to each of these bargains is that they turned out to be very bad bargains, and very unsatisfactory to the men who made them. Yet each man got what he had covenanted for. Esau got his pottage, and went away strong of limb from a hearty meal. Judas got his thirty pieces of silver, every one of them. No attempt was made to cheat in either case, and yet afterward both men

realized that each had cheated himself and had great sorrow over his bargain.

Esau sold something he did not care for and got what he wanted at the time; his birthright was a contemptible thing in his sight, and the pottage seemed very desirable; and yet we are told in the New Testament that there came a day when he was in great agony over the trade he had made, and that he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it carefully, with bitter tears. It seems to have been not only a bad bargain, but a fatally bad bargain for Esau.

We have an equally tragic case in relation to Judas. He got his thirty pieces of silver, and was at liberty to go about his business, but he was not happy. He could not find rest day or night. Esau despised his birthright while he had it. Judas despised his Lord while he was his disciple, but now that he had sold him and got good money in his pocket, Christ never seemed so beautiful and so noble to him, and the opportunity of being his disciple never appeared so precious. He went to and fro like a wild man; he could not eat, he could not sleep, and for the first time in his life the consciousness that he had money failed to give him any pleasure. Finally he seems to have had a dream of being able to rue the bargain and undo

the horrible deed he had done. He went back to the priests who had made the trade with him, with the money in his hands, and wanted to trade back. He said, "I can't keep this money; I have betrayed innocent blood." But they treated him with brutal coldness and disdain. They turned on him with contempt, and said: "See thou to that. What is that to us?" Poor Judas realized then what a bad bargain he had made. Unable to undo the deed and get out of his bargain, he was determined to at least get rid of the money; and so he flung the silver pieces, that he had sold his Lord to get, down on the floor in the presence of the men who had bribed him, and went away and hanged himself.

Surely there could not be two more unsatisfactory bargains than we have outlined in these cases. There is no light on the black clouds that hang over their sky.

I have brought these two bargains before you because they are illustrations of the danger each of us is in of making a bargain of the same kind. Esau is not the only man tempted to sell his birth-right. Judas is not the only man in danger of betraying his Lord. The same temptation comes to every one of us. We need to be alert and watchful and on our guard, lest we make the same awful

blunder and bargain away sacred and holy things for that which will only curse us in the having.

Judas associated with Christ for years, and must have been many times greatly moved by him and influenced by him, and yet finally sold him for money. Are we not in danger of allowing the love of this world's things to lead us to exchange our religious peace, and our joyous fellowship and communion with Christ, for the glitter and display of earthly things? Travelers tell us that the constant rubbing of the sand on Egyptian hieroglyphs removes every trace of color and even effaces the deep-cut characters from basalt rock. So there is great danger that the worry and hurry and competition of our everyday lives shall act on our spiritual nature as sand upon the hieroglyphs of the desert. If we are not careful they will take away the flush of fervor and the bloom of joy from our religion.

A visitor went one day into the studio of a great artist and saw on his easel some very fine gems, brilliant and sparkling. On being asked why he kept them there the painter replied: "I keep them there to tone up my eyes. The tone of the eye is brought up again, just as the musician by his tuning-fork brings his strings up to concert pitch." So if amid the sandstorms of these toilsome lives of

ours we are to retain the rich radiance of the soul, and keep our spiritual eyesight toned up, we must keep before us the vision of the Christ, and not allow ourselves to make the fatal bargain of losing our own soul in exchange for the perishing treasures of the world.

A connoisseur in spiritual things says that one of the first discoveries made by some, as they look at the soul's features in the glass of Christ's perfect law of liberty, is that from some cause the once brilliant hues of their spiritual life are becoming dim, the tone of a richer, fuller experience is being lowered, and the whole temperature of their holier lives is gradually but surely going down. We are told by a recent writer that at the foot of a cliff, under the windows of the castle of Miramar, formerly the residence of the Mexican emperor, Maximilian, at a depth of eighty feet below the surface of the clear waters of the Adriatic Sea, is a kind of cage fashioned by divers in the face of the rock. In that cage are some of the most magnificent pearls in existence. Having been left unworn for a long time, the gems lost their color, and the experts were unanimous in declaring that the only means by which they could be restored to their original brilliancy was by submitting them to a prolonged immersion in the depths of the sea. For

a number of years they have been lying in the crystal depths and are gradually regaining their unrivaled beauty and splendor. What a story of loss of the color of rich experience, and of high spiritual excellency, does this incident of the famous jewels suggest! O my brother, my sister, you cannot afford to exchange beauty of soul, sweetness of character, true purity and gentleness of spirit, for any worldly display, however brilliant it may be. At the last you will realize that the fatal bargains of Esau and Judas were not more tragic and terrible than those suggested in our third Scripture—"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

Every day we see men who have bargained away their freedom and liberty of spirit for the fearful bondage of iniquity. A celebrated detective tells in his memoirs how once, having discovered his man, he joined himself to him as a boon companion, went with him to his haunts, secured his confidence by long friendship, until at length, when all suspicion had been allayed, he got him, as a mere jest, to try on a pair of handcuffs, and then, snapping the spring that locked them, he took him, all helpless as he was, an easy prey. So there is many a sin that captures its poor slave in



that way. It first fascinates the soul and leads it in paths of pleasure, thus drowning a man's fears and drugging his sense of danger, until the handcuffs of habit slip about the wrists and the man's freedom is a thing of the past. Many such a poor bondman will agree with me that Esau was not a greater fool when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, or Judas more desperately cheated when he sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, than he who for a few passing hours of sinful pleasure barter away noble character, peace of soul, and immortal joy.

## CHAPTER X

## THE GOLDEN CALF

I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.—  
*Exodus xxxii, 24.*

THE chief lack in Aaron was backbone. He was strong in his head, stronger yet in his tongue, but very weak in the back. He was one of the kind of men who are easily influenced for either good or evil. You could tell, when you saw Aaron and had talked with him five minutes, whom he had been spending the day with. If he had been with Moses he talked one way, if he had been with Miriam he talked another way, and if he had been with some cabal of grumblers, whose stomachs were hungering for the leeks and onions of Egypt, he held altogether different language. Aaron has plenty of descendants. How many people we know who are a sort of reprint of the man or woman who had their ear last. As Christ said about the seed that was sown on stony ground and sprang up quickly, but withered away on the first hot afternoon, they have no root in themselves. I think

there is not enough stress laid on this in the education of children and in the development of young manhood and womanhood. It is quite possible for parents to love children with great tenderness, and hedge them about with every safeguard that they can imagine, and yet, through lack of wisely developing the child's individuality, bring up the boy or girl to be a mere weakling. The parental influence on childhood is like scaffolding in building a house—it is useless unless a house is being built so strong and solid inside that after a while the scaffolding may be taken down and the house still stand, a thing of worth and beauty. Many people are so brought up to lean on others that they have to be propped up all their lives or fall helpless to the ground. I get a great many letters from mothers about their boys, and nothing is more common than for a mother to say: "My boy means all right, but he is so easily influenced. When he is with good people, and the influences about him are pure, he is all right. But when he gets with the other class he is led astray before he realizes his danger." That is, he is another Aaron, who so long as Moses is by, with his steadfast principles and strong purpose to do right whatever happens, is all right and can say "No!" with emphasis to temptation. But when Moses is gone, and a mob

of skeptics are around with their evil prophecies and worldly lusts, he is easily won over to do their bidding.

Decision of character is one of the strongest and finest characteristics of a noble manhood. People who take hold of life with weak and nerveless fingers are sure to be scarred at every turn. If you ever pressed your way through a thicket where the wild stinging-nettles grew, you have probably learned that the way to escape being stung by them is to seize them in a quick and firm grasp, as though it were nettles that you were searching for. Then they do not sting. If you dawdle with them in a timid, fearful way, they poison your blood. It is so with the vexations and annoyances as well as the temptations to evil that often make a dense jungle through which we are compelled to force our way. If with courage we seize hold on everything that stands in the way and thrust it aside, pressing on to do our duty, we escape the sting and we come off victorious. A man who is weak and pliable never belongs to himself, and is the plaything of many people who, in comparison, are insignificant in every other way except power of will. I would urge every young man and young woman to hold fast to that crown of will power by which they are able to say "No!" to every temptation of

sin, and to hold the fort of character by the lance of truth and purpose against all comers.

Aaron's excuse to Moses seems very silly indeed to us. It could scarcely have deceived himself. He tries to throw all the blame upon the circumstances with which he was surrounded. Moses seems to have understood what sort of man he was, for he said to Aaron, "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" And then Aaron undertakes to throw all the blame upon the fire. He admits that he gathered the gold earrings and jewelry, but he says, "I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." He does not say anything about the mold he had made to pour the gold into, nor about the engraving tool he used to polish the image. He is strangely forgetful of all that. It was the fire that did it—the awful, wicked, idolatrous fire that turned all that jewelry into a calf to be worshiped!

But before we blame Aaron too much, or regard him to be an unusual sinner, let us reflect upon the commonness of his sin in the everyday life that we know so well. Those of you who have read George Eliot's *Adam Bede* will remember that very striking scene in which Mrs. Poyser, while scolding the clumsy Molly for her broken jug of beer, herself drops a much more precious jug from her angry

fingers, and exclaims: "Did anybody ever see the like? The jugs are bewitched, I think." And then to keep herself in countenance she proceeds to argue that "There's times when the crockery seems alive, an' flies out o' your hand like a bird," and concludes with the stern philosophy that "What is to be broke will be broke." How many of us, when arraigned by the sting of our own conscience, have been ready to excuse ourselves with Mrs. Poyser's theory that we were "bewitched" by some evil influence which was beyond our power.

Bishop Phillips Brooks, commenting, with that clear vision which ever characterized him, on these deceptive but flimsy excuses for sin, pictures a man all gross and sensual, a man still young, who has already lost the freshness, glory, and purity of youth. You question him about his life. You expect him to be ashamed, repentant. But there is no sign of anything of the kind. He says: "I am the victim of circumstances. What a corrupt, licentious, profane age this is in which we live! When I was in college I got into a bad set. When I went into business I was surrounded by bad influences. When I grew rich, men flattered me. When I grew poor, men bullied me. The world has made me what I am—this fiery, passionate,

wicked world. I had in my hands the gold of my boyhood which God gave me. Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Another man is not a profligate, but is a miser or a mere business machine. He has ceased to live above the world. All the holy dreams of self-sacrifice and deeds of mercy to lift the world higher in the scale of being, to do his part in sweetening the moral atmosphere of the community in which he lives, have as the years went on been coined into gold and passed over the counter. A slot-machine, that weighs you for a penny, has as much generous brotherly sympathy for his kind as he. And yet when you talk to him about it he has the glib answer ready on his tongue: "What can you ask of me? This is a mercantile community. The business man who does not attend to his business goes to the wall. I am what this intense commercial life has made me. I put my life in there, and it came out this golden calf." And then he gazes fondly and lovingly at the yellow calf, and his knees bend under him with the old lifelong habit of worshiping it, even while he abuses and disowns it. The same thing is true of the woman of society who has frittered away the holiest ideals of womanhood in worship of the fashionable habit. "The fire made me this," she says, as an excuse for



all her frivolity and pride. Here is a young college-bred man, who started out with fine dreams of public service and statesmanship, but who has yielded to the temptations of corrupt politics until he has degenerated into a time-serving party hack, and he gives, as an excuse for all his selfishness and partisanship, and as a whitewash for all the black spots on his robe of political life, "I put my principles into the furnace, and this thing came out."

Parents often make the same sort of excuses for their indifference or sinfulness, which has marred and maimed and dwarfed their children in their highest nature. The father says of his profligate son, having never done one wise or vigorous thing to make him a noble and pure-minded man: "I cannot tell how it has come. It has not been my fault. I put him into the world, and this came out."

These excuses are all useless. It is the height of folly for us to attempt to throw upon circumstances, or the world, or the age in which we live, the responsibility for the characters we are forming. Circumstances will do for us just what we choose to have them do. Put an acorn in the ground, and it is not the choice of the soil what kind of a tree it will develop from that acorn; no soil on earth, however fertile, could change the

nature of that germ and develop there a maple, a fir, or a pine tree. There is divine will power wrapped up in that little acorn which says: "It is not for you to decide, O earth, what I shall be. Make me an oak tree, whether you will or not." And an oak tree it is. Into that same earth there falls the germ of some poisonous plant, and though the soil were ever so benevolent it could not thwart the poisonous purpose of that seed and bring forth instead some sweet and pure flower. The evil purpose will have its way. Life is like that; the world will do for us just what we want it to do. If we say to it, "Make us good, high principled, holy visioned," it will develop in us, despite all the seeming contradictions and cross currents which we see, a pure and noble soul. If we say to the world, "Make us mean and vulgar, with natures creeping on the earth," it will draw out of us into development every germ of meanness and vileness there is in our human nature. But it will not do for us to hold up our meanness and say, "It was my nature, and I could not help it;" or to say, "The world was so wicked it spoiled me." No; let us face the truth: if we are wicked it is because we have chosen to be wicked. Our sins are not somebody else's, they are our own sins; and the quicker we realize our definite responsibility the

more hope is there that we may turn from them by confession and find forgiveness.

Let us have an earnest heart-searching to-night. What have you done with all the gold of innocence, of love, of intelligence, and of opportunity which God has bestowed upon you? As you hold it up before yourself to-night—the result of all these blessings—and see your own character in the mirror of conscience or of God's commandment, is it pleasing to you or not? You were once a little child, innocent and pure as an angel. Your hopes and your purposes unfold amid Christian influences. The first songs you remember were melodies of Christian love and mercy. And now, after twenty or thirty years have passed, what have you to show for it? If you have yielded your heart to the divine influences of Christianity, so that Christ has dwelt in fellowship with your soul, exalting your ideals, enlarging your vision, filling the veins of your thought and love with the throbbings of immortal courage, then you can in humility, but with assurance sweet and comforting, lift your life up into the presence of God and say, with Jean Paul Richter, "O my God, I have done the best I could with the material which thou hast given me."

But if you have chosen your own way, have

turned away from the fellowship of Christ, have hardened your heart against his love, have refused to submit your will to him, have let your affections run on the ground, twining about the burned stumps and rotten logs of worldliness, until to-night there is in your conscience the bitter feeling of remorse, the stinging conviction that you have sinned against God and against your own soul, I come to you with the ringing challenge of Moses, and cry unto you with all the earnestness of my soul, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

Do not deceive yourself in making the answer. Do not imagine you are on the Lord's side simply because your conscience condemns you and you are conscious of a drawing toward salvation. Both Agrippa and Felix were mightily stirred under the preaching of Paul, and were conscience-stricken until they trembled under conviction of sin and expected to hear Paul again, but they never became Christians.

Do not suppose that a mere attendance on church and a nominal sympathy with the church puts you on the Lord's side. Herod liked to hear John the Baptist preach. He was greatly fascinated with John's message and his style of giving it. The record says that he heard John "gladly;" and yet, instead of coming over on the side of John

and Christ, he beheaded the brave preacher and became a murderer.

No one should consider himself on the Lord's side unless he is keeping the commandments. Christ says, "He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me." An open confession of Christ which all the world may see, with which the heart and life agree, is the only way of putting ourselves really on the Lord's side. An Irish gentleman, pointing to a young man, once said, "Is he an O. O.?" "What do you mean by an O. O.?" "I mean," was the reply, "is he out-and-out for Christ?" That is what Christ desires of each one of us. It is not only to be sorry for sin, but to turn away from sin in heart and in conduct, that will bring us into saving relation with Christ.

Archdeacon Madden, of Liverpool, relates a curious experience with a dying gambler. He was once called out at midnight to see a dying man. He found him in a wretched and dirty back bedroom in a dingy street of Liverpool. He could not have been more than thirty years of age. He was propped up in bed and the gray look of death was upon his face.

As the minister entered the young man turned eagerly to him, and, holding out his hand, he said, "I'm dying, and I am not ready—not ready."

Just as the minister was about to speak the young man suddenly gasped out, "John, John, hand me those things on the table." John came forward and laid upon the bed a sporting paper, a pack of cards, a set of dice, a bottle of whisky, and some race lists. There was a deliberation about the whole business which convinced Dr. Madden that the matter had been talked over between the men. When all were spread out in due order, the dying man again turned to him and said: "Look, Vicar; those things have been the ruin of me; they have been a curse to me, and I want to turn my back upon them all. I want you to help me to do it."

Again he was about to speak, when suddenly stooping down he gathered them all and thrust them into the minister's hands with the words: "Shove them up my back."

The minister was so staggered by the request that he stammered out, "What—what do you mean?"

"I want you," he said, "as God's minister, to shove them up underneath my shirt. I want to turn my back upon them. I want to put them behind my back. I want God to see that I have done with them forever."

Dr. Madden did not know whether to laugh or

to cry. It was all so absurd and yet so pathetic. The man was in dead earnest. He had evidently thought it over, and made it as an act of true repentance.

The minister said to him, "I will do what you wish, but I will kneel down first, and you will repeat a prayer after me." He knelt, and then solemnly and earnestly the dying man repeated after him these words: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I renounce all my sins; from the bottom of my heart I renounce them all. Father, receive thy prodigal son, and forgive me for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Dr. Madden then rose from his knees and carried out the sufferer's wishes. To all those in that chamber of death it was a most solemn sacramental rite. It was the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of a true repentance. There the minister stood and held the things that had cursed the poor fellow's young manhood, ruined a promising career, and brought him down to poverty and a premature grave. As he held those emblems of evil behind his back he told him of that Saviour who "carried our sins," upon whom the Lord has laid the iniquities of us all.

I am sure that that strange but earnest picture ought to bear a message from God to some of you



who hear me now. Do not wait until the awful emergency of death to put your sins behind your back. Turn from them now and ask God to put them behind his back forever. King Hezekiah was in great trouble and says of his deliverance: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." God is no respecter of persons. He loves your soul as much as he did Hezekiah's. If you will come to him in repentance and confession, he will cast all your sins behind his back.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE COWARDS AND THE GIANTS

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.—*Numbers* xiii, 33.

It was unnecessary for these cowards to have added that last phrase, "and so we were in their sight." If a man has no self-respect he may be very sure that no one else will respect him. A man who feels like a grasshopper is pretty certain to look like a grasshopper. His cowardice will make itself evident enough to his enemies. Small men loom large when they have great courage, but giants are like grasshoppers when fear has taken possession of them.

These ten cowards brought back as enthusiastic a report about the beauty and fertility of the country as did Joshua and Caleb. They admitted that it was a land flowing with milk and honey. They came back loaded down with pomegranates and figs and grapes. Indeed, they found one vineyard in the valley of the brook of Eshcol where the

grapes grew in such enormous clusters that they broke off a cluster and hung it over a staff which two men carried between them. But all the enthusiasm over the richness of the soil and the desirability of the land as a home for their people was more than overbalanced by their fears. They declared that the enemy was intrenched in walled cities, and that they were people of enormous size. The men were giants, whose fathers were giants before them, and so mighty were these men of Anak that they made the Hebrews feel like grasshoppers in their presence. Therefore it was useless, in their opinion, to undertake to go in and possess the land, even though God had promised it to them. Their conclusion was that God himself was not strong enough to whip these giants with such little men as they were.

There were two men, however, out of that dozen spies who were not of the grasshopper grade. Joshua and Caleb had taken in the size of the giants as well as the rest, but not feeling like grasshoppers themselves, but rather like the courageous men that they were, they took a different view of the outlook.

They declared that Moses and his army, under the divine leadership, were easily able to overcome these giants, and urged that they go up at once and

possess the country. But the ten cowards overruled them, and succeeded in turning back the people to wander for forty years in the wilderness, suffering intolerable hardships, when they might have entered the land of promise and possessed it inside of forty days.

It is interesting to notice that these cowards were all destroyed by the plague, and the precious bodies that they were so careful of, and which they were so afraid to risk in fight under God's direction, were very shortly in their graves. The two brave men of the lot were the only ones that lived to see the final conquest of Canaan. God is not always on the side of "the strongest battalions," as Napoleon sneered; but he is ever on the side of the men of brave and noble purpose, for they are ever on his side. God has so ordered the universe that the bravest thing a man can do is also the safest, in a worldly as well as a spiritual sense.

We have here a very interesting illustration of what is going on to-day. Many people in Christian lands have come up so close to the promised land of a Christian life that they have become fascinated with its beauty and enjoyment. They have seen enough of the spiritual pomegranates and figs and grapes that grow in the land of Canaan, the land of forgiveness and Christian communion, to greatly



"We know we must toil if ever we win,  
Some other day;  
But we say to ourselves, there's time to begin  
Some other day;  
And so, deferring, we loiter on,  
Until at last we find withdrawn  
The strength of the hope we leaned upon,  
Some other day.

"And when we are old and our race is run,  
Some other day,  
We fret for the things that might have been done,  
Some other day.  
We trace the path that leads us where  
The beckoning hand of grim despair  
Leads us yonder out of the here,  
Some other day."

No man deals wisely with any giant sin that stands in his way who does not seize hold upon it at once and throttle it. A man recovering from a debauch was moaning to himself: "I must quit! I must reform! I must stop!" "Don't say dat, boss," put in a colored man. "Dat's no good. Say, 'I am quit. I is reformed. I is done gone stopped.' Do it now, boss, an' den you won't forget it."

That colored man had good honest common sense. The sin which you are putting off to some future time to battle with is growing more giant-like every day of delay.

But in thinking of becoming a Christian, and of

the difficulties that stand in the way, we must never lose sight of the divine help. That which made the difference between Caleb and Joshua and the ten cowards among the spies was that Caleb and Joshua had great faith in God, and believed that God would keep his word and make their arms victorious over the giants. All that it was necessary for them to do was to obey God and go forward doing their best. These other men would not have felt like grasshoppers in the presence of the sons of Anak if they had had the consciousness that God was with them to give them power to overcome their enemies. So you are not asked to become a Christian alone, nor to pursue the Christian life in your own strength. You are to have a mighty reinforcement in the presence of the divine Spirit strengthening you against every battle with temptation. God will take that fearful spirit out of your heart when you obey him and forsake your sins, and will give you a new heart; and the giants will seem like grasshoppers when you face them in this new courage and with this new assurance of God's alliance with you.

This power and willingness of God to change a man's heart and renew his nature is not a new thing, but is as old as God's dealings with men. Away back in the book of Job you may find this



remarkable description of the transformation of the soul: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy; for he will render unto man his righteousness." It is utterly futile to undertake a Christian life without this divine conversion, this surrender of yourself to the leadership of Jesus Christ, who is not only our Saviour, but our Captain in all our warfare against the giants of sin. The divine exaltation that will come to us in such fellowship will cause us to rejoice in the face of the enemy.

Spurgeon was once out riding, and was laughing, as he went, at the top of his voice. A friend met him and asked the cause of his mirth. "O," answered the great-hearted Christian, "I was just thinking about 'My grace is sufficient.' I was thinking how big grace is and how little I am."

But, after all, the initiative is in our hands. God would not give the promised land to the Hebrews unless they entered the land in obedience to him and fought for it. That is in accord with universal

law. That was a remarkable scene in the life of Joan of Arc, when, as a girl of seventeen, she was brought into the presence of all the great priests and cardinals of the kingdom and submitted to a most severe and searching examination. One of the priests said: "Joan, you say that it is the will of God that the king should be crowned. If it is the will of God why, then, he will be crowned, and he needs not your help." "Aye," said Joan, "it is true that it is the will of God, and he giveth the victory; but men must fight." Garibaldi said something very much like that at Naples in 1860: "My children, liberty is from God, liberty is from heaven. But," he added, "you must all rise; you must fight for Italy." So freedom from sin, salvation from the guilt of sin, is through Jesus Christ; but we ourselves must rise and fight with him for the overthrow of every giant of evil in our hearts and in the world about us.

It need not take a long time. This Christian Canaan may be entered by you at once if you are ready to obey God. Bishop Newman tells an interesting story of the conversion of that great citizen of Ohio, Chief Justice Chase. Bishop Newman had observed, during the time he was pastor of Metropolitan Church, Washington, that when he was administering communion Chief Justice Chase

always retired. He was impressed that he ought to talk with him about the matter, so he asked him why he did not come to the sacrament, to which he replied, "I am not a Methodist and I am not good enough." Dr. Newman replied, "We will omit consideration of the former point and speak of the latter." Then he turned to the communion invitation and read: "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins—" "Stop right there," said the Chief Justice, and for an hour they talked upon repentance.

Soon after, as he was administering the communion, Mr. Chase was present. After all had communed who seemed to wish to do so, Dr. Newman waited still, and said: "Is there another who wishes to come? If you feel worthy you are not fit to come. If you feel unworthy, but repent of sin and trust in Christ, come." With that the Chief Justice arose and with bowed head came to the altar; but, instead of kneeling, he fell down upon the floor. The whole congregation lingered and prayed for a soul that was seeking God. By and by the minister administered the communion to him. When he rose upon his feet he held his head erect, and the smile of forgiving grace was on his face.

Not long after, Judge Miller, on the eve of his de-

parture for Europe, came to see Mr. Chase. The latter took him with him in his carriage to visit a sick friend. Miller turned and said to him, "How are you?" Said he, "Brother Miller, I am well in mind, feeble in body; but Christ is my satisfying portion. I have given up all to him." "Well," said Miller, "I wish I could say that. I have been trying for eighteen years to solve the problem." Said Chase, "I have solved it, and Christ is my satisfying portion." Two or three days later they went to call him in the morning and there was no answer. The Chief Justice was dead. How happy the solution of life's great problem on that Sunday morning a few weeks before!

How happy it would be for you if I could arouse you to now solve the same great problem in the same way! You are standing outside of the promised land, hesitating to enter because of difficulties that seem so giantlike in their proportions that you are afraid to confront them. But, thank God, you are not asked to confront them alone, and Jesus Christ will receive you, sinful as you are, and give you a new heart of courage and love, and strengthen your arm to fight, so that you may come out conqueror over all foes that stand in your way. You will find the name of Jesus a name before which every giant of sin will fall.

Solve the problem

One of the magazines has a new telling, by William Converse, of an old story of the Crusades. It is the story of how Gilbert Becket was taken prisoner by a Saracen emir and was for years his slave. For a long time he was treated with great cruelty; but finally, one day when he was being beaten, Roesa, the daughter of the emir, interfered in his behalf, and afterward, through her pleading with her father, his lot was greatly improved. As time went on he came to love this young girl, and the maiden herself loved the Crusader, whose life she had saved, with even a greater devotion. The emir at length discovered his daughter's secret, and, more than that, that the young man had explained and defended to her the doctrine of the Cross. Fearful for his daughter's faith, he purposely gave the young captive a chance to escape. He sent him on horseback to a distant city. The youth determined to gain his freedom. He parted tenderly with the Saracen maid. Whatever her suspicions, she kept them quiet. She met him on horseback, as he was ready to set out, and gave him a silken purse into which she had woven some of her own hair. He laid it next his heart, and sped away to return no more.

An adventurous voyage brought him to London. He wrote to the emir that he would send him a ran-

som of gold. "Englishmen," he declared, "are like birds; for, though caged within gilded wires, they love freedom."

The daughter sank under the eclipse of her hope, and began to languish. Her father was anxious. The healing men were summoned, but could not minister to a mind diseased.

All at once the maiden rallied and began to gain strength and vigor. A new purpose had seized her. Her lover had not fled because he did not love her, but because freedom was a man's true life. She would go to him.

She soon set sail for England. From the port she sent a note to her father.

She knew but two English words—"Gilbert" and "London." From port to port she found her way by using the latter word. She at length reached the English metropolis. Then came the great difficulty—to find among that seething mass of humanity one man whose Christian name only she knew. Her Arabic was gibberish to those English-speaking people. To all the crowds that surrounded her, regarding her as one who seemed "crazed with some sorrow," she spoke but one word. "Gilbert! Gilbert!" she cried, as she went from street to street. "Here comes the Gilbert maiden," people would exclaim to one another as they saw

her. One day she strayed to Cheapside. As usual, a crowd gathered. "It is the Gilbert Saracen maid," cried the people around.

But then a strange thing happened. Out from a house rushed a servant of Gilbert Becket, who strode along, pushing the throng aside, and came close to the maiden. "It is she!" he exclaimed, in glad recognition. "I thought I could not mistake; it is the Saracen maid!" They told him she had been calling for Gilbert. "And Gilbert she shall see, to his joy and hers, as quickly as she can cross the street and get within yon gate and door," said the servant.

The meeting was unspeakably glad. That which Gilbert had never dared to believe or ask had come to pass. Roesa had given up her father's home for him. Later she also gave up the Moslem faith and became a happy Christian. Gilbert Becket and Roesa were married. Gilbert became sheriff of London, and the Saracen maid became the mother of Thomas à Becket, the famous chancellor and martyr.

The two talismanic words that brought triumph to the Saracen maid were "Gilbert" and "London." But there are two talismanic words greater than those. They are "Jesus" and "Heaven!" I care not how far away in the desert of sin you are, nor



how hopeless and despairing your present outlook for a holy and a pure life, if you will turn your face away from your sin, with these two talismanic words upon your lips and in your heart, you shall in God's good time stand before the gates of heaven, and they will open to your weary feet at the blessed name of "Jesus." Take them as your watchwords from this very hour.

## CHAPTER XII

## THE ANGEL THAT BLOCKS THE WAY

And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.—*Numbers xxii, 34.*

BALAAM was a brilliant and ambitious man. His two weak points were his longing for money and his longing for applause. God had given him remarkable gifts, but instead of walking humbly as a prophet of God, and letting his light shine so that those who saw his good works should be led to glorify God, he sought to draw popular attention to himself, and succeeded in doing so. The people about, in surrounding countries, came to believe that Balaam had the power to curse a nation and cause it to fall to pieces in ruin, or, on the other hand, the power to bless a nation and cause it to become prosperous and triumphant. And so Balak, of the Moabites, sent a message to Balaam and sought to bribe him to curse the people of Israel, and said to him: "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too

mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

Now Balaam himself was not at all deceived. He knew that he had no power to bless or curse of himself, and that neither his blessing nor his curse would amount to anything unless he was simply the voice proclaiming God's purpose. But Balaam's eyes glistened at the rich presents that were sent and he wanted to keep the gold, and he asked of the Lord the privilege of going with the messengers and doing their bidding, but was refused. The messengers went home, but were followed by a still more honorable company of princes with a still richer bribe. And this time Balak sends word to Balaam: "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people."

Balak was led to do this, no doubt, because of the peculiar way in which Balaam had refused the first bribe. He did not say, out and out, "It is wrong, and I cannot do it. The people of Israel are blessed of God and nothing can stand against

them." But instead he had left the impression on the messengers that personally he would like to go (which was the truth), while he regretfully said to them, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." Balaam was like a man who thinks it is wrong to drink wine, or to give himself up to some questionable indulgence, and when tempted does not say, out and out, "It is against my conscience and I will not do it," but hems and haws, and looks sorry, and says, "I should like to do it, but really I ought not to, for I am a church member, you know;" or, "I was not raised to do that kind of thing." Such a man has already begun to compromise with the devil, and is certain to have further trouble with that temptation. If a thing is wrong, say so straight out, and say "No!" with an emphasis that will make the devil's hair stand on end. Thus resisted he will flee from you every time. But Balaam dallied with the matter, and so, no doubt, some shrewd messenger in that first committee whispered to Balak, "Although Balaam refused, I saw his weak spot: he likes to be flattered, and he loves gold; send him a bigger bribe, and send him a committee of princes, and you will catch him sure enough." So when the new committee come back with their richer bribes we can see that Balaam is pleased to be tempted,

although he blusters and says, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." He was very careful, however, not to send them away with that sort of an answer, but begged the committee to stay over night, and let him entertain them, while he asked again permission of the Lord to accept their offer.

How many of you have made that same blunder! Instead of driving away the tempter, you have entertained him as a guest. No man can help temptation coming. The holiest people on earth have been tempted. Jesus Christ himself was grievously tempted of the devil. But there is a vast difference between saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" and "Come in, and stay over night, and I will see if I cannot fix it up some way so that I can do what you want." It is a fatal mistake to thus play with the tempter. When Balaam asks permission of God the second time to do what God has told him is wrong, we are certain he is sinning against his own conscience. In matters of simple judgment about worldly things it is well to take time for reflection, but it has been well said that in matters of duty "first thoughts are best." Frederick W. Robertson says the first thoughts that come to us about a question of conscience are

more fresh, more pure, and have more of God in them. There is nothing like the first glance we get at duty, before there has been any special pleading of our affections or inclinations. Duty is never uncertain at first. It is only after we have got involved in the mazes and sophistries of wishing that things were different from what they are that duty seems indistinct. Taking time to consider a duty is usually only seeking after some excuse for explaining it away. A man is usually simply juggling with his own conscience when he takes time to think over a question of direct right and wrong in conduct. Deliberation is often only dishonesty. God's guidance is plain when we are true.

Balaam knew very well what was right, but he wanted to make money and win applause without bringing on himself the curse of God. He tried to find a way to do what Balak wanted him to do, and yet not subject himself to divine punishment. He went to God to try and get his duty altered, instead of seeking to find out what his duty was. But right and wrong cannot be juggled with like that. Even God cannot say that a thing is right to-day and wrong to-morrow.

Am I speaking any man's heart story to him to-night? Am I uncovering any woman's soul to

herself? If so, I pray God that the Holy Spirit will strengthen you in your weakness, so that you may have the courage to be honest with your own soul and turn away from the sin that is tempting you to everlasting disaster.

The principal theme, however, to which I wish to call your special attention at this time, lies farther along in the story. That night, while the second committee were lodged in Balaam's house, God told Balaam that if the men should call him in the morning, he should rise up and go with them, and should speak the word which God gave him. Balaam was then wild with greed, and, seeming to have gained his point, did not wait for the men to call him in the morning, but rose up and saddled his ass and went with the princes of Moab. And the record says, "God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the



ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely

now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

See the tenderness and loving-kindness of God manifested in the presence of the angel standing in the way of this tempted man going into sin, and seeking to turn him from his course not only once, but twice and thrice! The first time he is turned out of the way gently, without harm; the second time his foot is crushed; the third time he is brought to the ground, and only when in that helpless condition are his eyes opened to behold God's angel blocking the way. This, then, is the message I want to put on your hearts, that God is seeking always to block our way into sin; that it is never easy to go on a path of wrongdoing. There is many a thorn in that path—thorns that are not planted there because God hates us, but because he loves us. The angel did not block the way with drawn sword because God took delight in frightening Balaam, nor was his foot crushed because God took pleasure in giving him pain, nor was he overthrown and humiliated because God was pleased at his downfall; but the infinite pity of God was blocking his way into sin, making

it impossible for him to go recklessly, without knowing his danger, on the road to ruin.

The Bible is full of such illustrations of God's kindly and loving intervention in behalf of sinning souls. Even John, the beloved disciple, at one time was so filled with anger and the spirit of revenge against a town that had refused to admit Christ and his disciples, that he craved permission of Jesus to call down fire from heaven to consume the people. Jesus turned to him with severe rebuke, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." So far as we know, that is the only rebuke that John ever received from his divine Lord. He does not seem to ever have needed another. How it must have comforted John as he lay with his head on the bosom of Jesus at the last supper, or as he received the final commission from the cross to care for the Saviour's mother, that the Lord had dealt thus faithfully with him, and that that keen rebuke had come as an angel from God to block the path down which he was tempted toward a revengeful and cruel spirit! If John had not heeded that angel in the path, he never would have been known in after history as the "beloved disciple."

And on the night of Christ's arrest Peter had an experience of the angel that blocked the way. He

had had one experience before, when Christ had told him of his coming crucifixion, and Peter had declared that it could never happen. Christ had blocked his way with the stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me." But on that awful night of Christ's betrayal Peter fell again into sin, and denied his Lord. Then Jesus with a single look blocked his way to utter ruin. It did not crush his foot, as in Balaam's case; but it did more—it broke his heart. That was enough for Peter, and from that bitter night he turned about to lifelong fidelity to Christ.

Paul, too, knew what it was to have the angel block his way while on the downward path. The whole world has been interested in that midday vision on the way to Damascus, when, his heart full of bigotry and cruelty, suddenly the light shone above that of the noonday sun, and the heavenly voice called to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." That to Saul meant salvation. It effectually blocked the path that led to hell. He turned back, to be no longer Saul, the persecutor, but to become Paul, the triumphant Christian apostle whose life was to be poured out as an oblation before God.

God has not changed in his loving-kindness to-

ward lost sinners. His tenderness still seeks after men and women who are tempted and led captive on the way to ruin. It is not easy, I repeat, to go that way. Not one of you can do it without kicking against the pricks; not one of you can go on in sin without facing the angel of God with his drawn sword. He will bring you easily into the kingdom if he can; if he cannot bring you gently, he will bring you in at the cost of a crushed foot or of a broken heart. He will even follow you into the throes of bankruptcy or sickness, or defeat of all your hopes or plans, if thereby he can save you from eternal hurt and destruction. There are those that hear me to-night who know what all this means. You remember when you would not obey God in days of prosperity and joy; but you did come to obey him in the face of rebuke and sorrow.

I doubt not that some of you this very night are in the narrow place of the vineyards, with the wall on either hand, and God's angel standing in the way. O that your eyes may be opened to see, and that you may have wisdom to turn from the path of danger ere it is too late!

Some of you have met with God's rebuke; you have found that the way of the transgressor is hard; you have kicked against the goad, but it has

hardened your heart and made you bitter in your thoughts toward God. I want to urge upon you to-night the un wisdom of that. I want to show you that it is not reasonable. It is not hate, but love, that has impelled the Lord to make of your sinful way a way of sorrow and disappointment.

Above everything I long to do justice to my Lord and to your Saviour. I would that I had language and genius to paint before you the picture of his compassion, of his sympathy and love. I would that I could cause you to appreciate the brooding tenderness of that shepherd-spirit that hovers about you and seeks to bring you back from danger and save you from harm. I would that I could make you see with new eyes the ninety and nine gathered in the fold, and the Shepherd turning away into the darkness, going down into the deep cañon, peering into the thickets, seeking, calling longingly after you, the lost lamb. Paul Laurence Dunbar seems to have caught the real spirit of the Master's love in his little hymn:

"O li'l' lamb out in the col',  
 De Mastah call you to de fol',  
     O li'l' lamb!  
 He hyeah you bleatin' on de hill;  
 Come hyeah an' keep yo' mou'nin' still,  
     O li'l' lamb!

"De Mastah sen' de Shepud fo'f;  
 He wandah souf, he wandah no'f,  
     O li'l' lamb!  
 He wandah eas', he wandah wes':  
 De win' a-wrenchin' at his breas',  
     O li'l' lamb!

"O, tell de Shepud whaih you hide;  
 He want you walkin' by his side,  
     O li'l' lamb!  
 He know you weak, he know you so';  
 But come, don't stay away no mo',  
     O li'l' lamb!

"An' af'ah while de lamb he hyeah  
 De Shepud's voice a-callin' cleah—  
     Sweet li'l' lamb!  
 He answah f'om de branches thick,  
 O Shepud, I's a-comin' quick—  
     O li'l' lamb!"



## CHAPTER XIII

THE MELANCHOLY FATE OF MR. FACING-BOTH-  
WAYS

Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.  
—*Numbers xxxi*, 8.

It is no disgrace to be killed on the battlefield if you are fighting honorably for what you believe to be right. But Balaam died the death of a traitor. For this is our old acquaintance, the prophet whom Balak sought to bribe to curse the Israelites, and who asked God for that privilege and was refused. But here we have the last picture in Balaam's earthly life, and he is dying on the battlefield with Israel's spears in his bosom, an out-and-out foe of the people whom God had blessed. For Balaam had finally gone with the messengers from Balak, and Balak had prepared altars and offered up sacrifices, and Balaam had sought to change the mind of God in regard to the people of Israel. But every time when Balaam spoke his message, it was a blessing and not a curse that was uttered. At the very first altar, when Balak and his princes were stand-

ing about and were listening in breathless silence to the words of Balaam, we can imagine the disappointment in their faces as he began to say: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. . . . Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" No wonder Balak said in his disgust, "I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether!"

Balak, however, had persistence worthy of a better cause. He took Balaam to another point, where he could look out over the tents of Israel, and on top of Mount Pisgah Balaam built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar; but when he stood up again to speak to Balak and his listening associates, this is what he said: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the

Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain."

But Balak was determined to try once more, and he said to Balaam, "Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence." And so on the top of Mount Peor seven altars more were builded and offerings made upon them. But Balak was more crushed than ever when he heard Balaam's poetic outburst explaining the vision that came to him at the altar: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth

out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn: he shall eat up the nations of his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

At last Balak gives up his hope and in his anger warns Balaam to get out of his sight: "Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor."

Happy for Balaam if he had really parted from Balak and his vicious temptations at that time. But the man was not at peace in his own heart. He was not a genuine man. He was not sincere. He did not want to displease God, but he wanted still more to please himself. He cared nothing for Balak, except as he could use him; but neither did he care anything for the Lord, except as he hoped to use him. So now he enters again into negotiations with the enemy, and advises Balak to do by strategy what he could not do by direct assault. He counsels Balak to use the fascinations of the daughters of Moab to entice the Israelites into idolatry. Thus, by degrading the people of Israel and leading them into sin, he would snatch them

from God's protection. God will not curse the good: therefore make them wicked, and cause them to bring the curse on their own heads. Frederick W. Robertson has well said that a more diabolical wickedness can scarcely be conceived. Yet Balaam, as the world goes, was an honorable and veracious man; nay, a man of delicate conscientiousness and unconquerable scruples—a man of lofty religious professions, highly respectable and respected.

There are men who would not play false and yet would wrongly win. There are men who would not lie and yet who would bribe a poor man to support a cause which he believes in his soul to be false. There are men who would resent at the sword's point the charge of dishonor, who would yet for selfish gratification entice the weak into sin and damn body and soul in hell. There are men who would be shocked at being called traitors, yet who in time of war will make a fortune by selling arms and ammunition and provisions to their country's foes. There are men, respectable and respected, who give liberally and support religious societies and sit in fashionable church pews, who would not swear nor do any outward, open sin, who make their wealth by crushing the lifeblood out of white slaves in stenchful sweat shops, or by renting

their property for liquor saloons and gambling hells and brothels. We are all ready to curse Balaam, and he deserves it; but let us not forget that Balaam did not do one whit worse than these men, and if God damned him for doing what he did, hell yawns for the men who to-day are trapping the unwary that they may fatten their own greed.

We may see illustrated here the tremendous importance of the current in which a man places himself. There is a current in every community that sweeps heavenward. If a man puts himself into that current and deliberately sets out to serve God, to make his friends among Christian people, and to turn from everything that would be displeasing to God, the current of his life will gain momentum every day, and will help to sweep him onward toward the heavenly shore. On the other hand, there is a current in every community that plunges downward toward the bottomless pit; and if a man thrusts himself into that current, he is borne remorselessly on. We become like the people with whom we associate, and our thoughts and ideals, whether good or evil, have power to infuse their own quality into the very blood and fiber of our being. If you have ever read *Silas Marner* you will remember the typical miser who is described in that book. The miser had been a very dutiful

man at church, and was wronged by a brother, and fled from the town and the church and buried himself in the country. He was a poor man—a weaver; and he wove and hoarded his gold, and used to go to the little spot where he had hoarded it and turn it with his hands and feel how rich he was. But one night there came a strange, sad cry, and he went out to see whence it came; and when he returned the gold had gone, and in its place he saw a little child. It was a most unwelcome exchange; but when he turned to the little child and caressed it, and it caressed him, and he fed it and grew to love it, the heart of the man was humanized, and his character was ennobled and exalted. The more he had loved the money, the more hateful he became; the more he loved the child, the lovelier he grew. Man is made by his loves. If we love mean and vulgar things we shall grow to be like them. But if we love pure, noble, holy things we shall grow to be as noble as they.

Balaam had no thought that he would finally cast in his lot with Balak and the enemies of God; but by his double-heartedness, his facing one way and then the other in order if possible to gain both the wages of righteousness and the bribe of unrighteousness, he thrust himself into this wicked current that finally forced him into the position of



an open foe of God's people. Robert Louis Stevenson's book that won him his first great fame, and which has been so often discussed, with its story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, won because we all have in our own consciousness something which bears witness to the possibility of our being tempted to a like career. The result is always the same when the temptation is yielded to. The bad side of a man's nature will always win where a man gives himself up to live a life which faces both ways. The wicked other half may be kept in the background for a time, but in the end it will come to be *the* personality, and the good will be crushed out entirely.

There are many people like Balaam in our modern world. They have a poetic side to their nature. They have vision hours when goodness seems indescribably beautiful and a holy life greatly attracts them. They have fine sensibilities; they are wrought upon by a tale of woe, and if you talk to them of the unspeakable horrors of Turkish persecutions in Armenia, the sufferings of starving Cubans, or if their favorite novelist paints a touching picture of some fair life betrayed and debauched, they will be moved to tears and will have an hour of charitable feeling. The vulgar, loathsome, repulsive side of common sins is hate-

ful to them. But they do not hate sin because it is a wrong against God; it is only because it offends their taste. And with all their poetic sentiment and generous impulses and occasional tearful feeling, they do not really love humanity, and their lives go on like Balaam's—seeking their own selfish interests, without real worship to God or love for mankind, until the drifting current of selfishness carries them to the camp of those “having no hope and without God in the world.”

I appeal to you for an open, outspoken attitude in behalf of Christ and a righteous life. It is the only right course, and it is the only safe course. I look into many of your faces to-night knowing that the one thing that you need, above everything else, is a complete cleansing of your hearts from sin; a radical transformation of your life, so that you will stand a uniformed soldier of Jesus Christ. You need not to be made better, but, by God's forgiving mercy, to be made thoroughly good.

A physician was giving earnest attention to a sick child, and encouraged the anxious mother to hope for her recovery. The mother said to the child one day, “The doctor says he thinks he will soon make mamma's little girl better.”

“But why will he not make me well?” asked the child with eagerness.

Jesus Christ is able to cure us of sin. And it is not to be better only, but to be well, that we should pray.

I repeat it: This, above everything else, is your greatest want. Hugh Price Hughes relates an incident of a distinguished minister who was suddenly invited to visit a dying man. He found him with little furniture, no food, and no attendant, in the agonies of death. He was dying in the greatest destitution. "O sir," said he to the minister, "I am in great want." And the minister made the mistake we too often make, and thought he was referring to some temporal wants. He said, "Yes, I see you are in this wretched place, with no food, no medicine, no attendant. I will go and get a doctor and a nurse, and some food and nourishment." "O," he said, lifting his thin hand, "that is not what I want. What I want," he said, in the deep voice of the dying, "is to know that my sins are forgiven." When a man comes to die, he wants to know that God has forgiven him, that Christ has saved him. But if the dying need it, we need it just as certainly.

A great many make the same tragic mistake that Balaam made. Balaam longed to die the death of the righteous. There is scarcely a passage in the Bible more often quoted than Balaam's expression

of desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" That is very beautiful, and I have no doubt that for once Balaam was sincere. But he was not willing to pay the price. Everything has its cost. The cost of dying right is living right. To die the death of the righteous a man must pay the price of living the life of the righteous. Some of you who are not Christians are like Balaam in that you desire, and in some way expect, to die the death of a Christian. You read the story of triumphant Christian deathbeds, or you have stood by the side of the couch when your father or mother or some dear Christian friend met death with a smile and with the glow of heaven's joy on the face, and you have said to yourself, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" But you are not living for it. Jesus says, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father." And yet you go on denying him—refusing to open the door of your heart at his knocking, refusing to stand on his side in the fellowship of the church, refusing to renounce your sins and bow before him in penitence, seeking his forgiveness. How can you expect that you will die the death of the Christian, and have a Christian's welcome into heaven, while you are going on living a

life of selfishness and sin, and neglecting to accept Christ as your Saviour? Let Balaam, broken-hearted and ruined, dying a traitor on the battlefield in disgrace and shame, bring you to-night his message of warning. He tried to live the life you are living, and you see the end. "God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Balaam found it so, and every sinner against God from that day to this has found it true. The laws of the universe will not be reversed on your account. Balaam had his chance for repentance and refused it, and lost his soul. He sinned against great light and died in great darkness. You have great light. Christ speaks to you with many voices. Do not sin against him! Do not grieve the Holy Spirit! Choose now an open and honorable career as the friend and servant of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE FLIGHT AND ESCAPE OF A SINNER

Be sure your sin will find you out.—*Numbers xxxii, 23.*

There shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither.—*Numbers xxxv, 6.*

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.—*John vi, 37.*

THERE is a Scripture declaration that “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.” That is because there is an invisible pursuer which makes a coward of the man who is conscious that his sins pursue him and that he has no way within himself of making defense against their attack. That is the reason that many men who have been reckless in going into sin become so timid that “the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.” This constant threat of pursuit and punishment robs the soul of peace, and though it may be forgotten for a time, the sinner has no assurance when the pursuer will rise up to denounce him. Byron wrote out a bitter experience:

“That pang where more than madness lies!  
The worm that will not sleep, and never dies,  
Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night,  
That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light;  
That winds around and tears the quivering heart,  
Ah! Wherefore not consume it and depart?”

Byron was not the only man who has been thus haunted. We talk about haunted houses and laugh at the superstition, but a haunted soul is no superstition; it is a dread everyday reality wherever sin hangs unforgiven above a sinner's head. Heraud writes:

“Will no remorse, will no decay,  
O Memory, soothe thee into peace?  
When life is ebbing fast away  
Will not thy hungry vultures cease?  
Ah, no! As weeds from fading free,  
Noxious and rank, yet verdantly,  
Twine round a ruined tower,  
So to the heart, untamed, will cling  
The memory of an evil thing  
In life's departing hour;  
Green is the weed when gray the wall,  
And thistles rise while turrets fall.

“Yet open Memory's book again;  
Turn o'er the lovelier pages now,  
And find that balm for present pain  
Which past enjoyment can bestow;  
Delusion all, and void of power!  
For e'en in thought's serenest hour,



When past delights are felt  
 And Memory shines on scenes of woe,  
 'Tis like the moonbeam on the snow,  
 That gilds, but cannot melt;  
 That throws a mocking luster o'er,  
 But leaves it cheerless as before."

If men would only believe God's word about the certainty of sin pursuing the sinner and spoiling all the sweet gladness of innocence, they would resist temptation and keep their freedom. The devil deceives us with the feeling that sin is only dangerous when discovered; while the real danger in sin is not in its discovery, but in the hurt which it does to our own moral natures. And no outward evidence is required to secure our conviction at the judgment seat; the certain witness to our sin is in our own conscience. Shakespeare, in "Richard III," makes false Clarence say:

"My dream was lengthened after life;  
 O then began the tempest to my soul!  
 I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,  
 With that grim ferryman which poets write of,  
 Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.  
 The first that there did greet my stranger soul  
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,  
 Who cried aloud—*What scourge for perjury*  
*Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?*  
 And so he vanished. Then came wandering by  
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair

Dabbled in blood, and he shrieked out aloud,  
*Clarence is come—false, fleeting, perjured Clarence—*  
*That stabb'd me in the field at Tewkesbury;*  
*Seize on him, furies, take him to your torments!*  
 With that, methought, a legion of foul fiends  
 Environed me, and howlèd in mine ears  
 Such hideous cries that, with the very noise,  
 I trembling waked, and for a season after  
 Could not believe but that I was in hell;  
 Such terrible impression made my dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have done these things  
 That now give evidence against my soul.”

And that there is no lack of witnesses is clearly  
 set forth farther along in Shakespeare's heart-  
 searching tale:

“My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
 And every tale condemns me for a villain.  
 Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;  
 Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree;  
 All several sins, all used in each degree,  
 Thronged to the bar, crying all—Guilty! Guilty!  
 I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,  
 And, if I die, no soul shall pity me.  
 Nay, wherefore should they? Since that I myself  
 Find in myself no pity to myself.”

And these strong lines of the great poet are in  
 perfect harmony with Scripture truth and with

the testimony of human history and of our own consciences.

Happy, then, is the thought of a refuge from the pursuer of our souls. We have a glimpse, in the second verse of the text, of that mercy and love of God which ever seek to save the sinner. Under this old Hebrew arrangement certain cities were set apart as cities of refuge, to which, if one had slain another by accident or without malicious intent, he could flee, and be safe from the manslayer, or avenger. I have called your attention to it because of its suggestion of the great refuge which God has provided for the sinner in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. The roads to the cities of refuge were required to be kept open and were laid out straight, and the gates were always open, so that nothing could stand in the way of the escape of a man who was really in earnest. So Christ is accessible to every sinner who will take the straight road of obedience and enter through the open gate of repentance and confession of sin. The personal flight of the manslayer was necessary for his escape. No one could do it for him, and no amount of thinking about it, or good impulses or desires in that direction, could save him from death at the hands of the avenger. So it is true that no amount of good intention can be of any value to a sinner

unless the good intentions are put into action and cause a real arousing of the man or woman to flee to Christ and enter in to him as their Saviour and Refuge.

Perhaps someone says, "I would like to be a Christian. I am ashamed and sorry on account of my sins, and the thought of them robs me of peace; but I know not how to begin to find refuge." If you will just put aside all thoughts of mystery, and ask God for forgiveness in Christ's name as simply as a little child would ask to be forgiven by his mother, your perplexity and trouble will be at an end. I have been reading an incident related by Dr. James Todd. One wintry night Dr. Todd got on the train in Chicago to return to his home in Michigan. He had shaken the sleet from his ulster, thrown it over the back of the seat, and sat down beside it, when a voice called in a trembling tone, "Hello, doctor!"

He immediately sat upright, and, looking forward to see who saluted him, recognized the familiar faces of two of his parishioners. He hastened to meet them, and soon learned of the serious illness of the man who at home was familiarly known as "Rob." He had been with his wife to consult a specialist in Chicago.

"I am very weak, doctor," he said, "but am

gaein' home for a little and will bide there tae vote for McKinley, and then I'll come back and see the specialist, for he has helped me."

The man was a Scotchman who had been raised in a Christian home in the old country, but had been for many years religiously indifferent.

Once he had admitted to Dr. Todd, "I am gey fond o' a dram; religion is not what it once seemed tae be; I dinna like these ministers who rant in sermons, an' tell stories tae frighten the bairns, but like tae hear you preach once in a while because you are Scotch—and for the days o' auld lang syne."

In the morning, when they reached their destination, as Dr. Todd said good-bye he added, "I am coming to see you, Robert, as a man and a friend, but not as the minister."

"Well," he replied, "I'll be glad to see you. Guid morning."

A few days afterward the minister fulfilled his promise and found the sick man resting on a lounge. His cough had grown worse, and a sickly pallor hovered around his naturally ruddy cheeks.

They talked for a while about Scotland, but no reference was made to religion. Finally the sick man laughed till he coughed, as he said, "I told the neebors ye were comin' tae prepare me fur

burial; but I said, 'I'm gain' tae cheat him, minister though he be.' "

On the minister's next visit he found the patient still weaker, the hacking cough more troublesome, and his manner less pleasant.

"How are you to-day, Robert?"

"I am not very weel, but the doctor has just left. I have been won'rin' hoo it is sick folks in this toon dinna like the minister tae see them—an' pay the doctors for comin' who fairly tire them. Na doot it is the mule in man that accounts for it."

After a pause Dr. Todd asked, "Robert, would you like me to read you a Scotch story? I've brought it along with me, believing it would interest you. It's a good one, but if it wearies you just tell me, and I will stop reading."

His eyes suddenly brightened, and his hungering nature spoke: "Read on. I'll be glad to hear it."

Dr. Todd took from his pocket a copy of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, and read from "The Doctor's Last Journey." As he read of the doctor's longing for Drumsheugh, and their friendship for each other, the sick man said in softened accents, "That's true for Scotchmen."

As the minister proceeded to read of the struggles of the doctor and Jess, Robert's eyes were moistened with tears. When he listened to the

doctor's confession to his friend, he whispered huskily to himself, "That's me, that's me."

When the story was finished it was easy to see that the citadel of his heart had surrendered, and that in the inner chambers of his soul he was weeping like a sorrowing child. The minister wisely pressed his hand and slipped gently and quietly out of the room, leaving him to come to himself, with his past hanging threateningly over him, the uncertain future demanding recognition, and his soul hemmed in between.

Next day Dr. Todd visited him again and asked, "How did you like the story?"

"Ah, it was grand! Will ye read tae me again?"

The doctor opened the book again and read McClure's confession. As he finished it the sick man interrupted his further reading by an earnest confession of his own: "I have na gotten over that a' night. Doctor, I am waur than he. For I did not regard God, and I turned my back on the kirk of our fathers and my past early training. I sometimes cursed a wise Providence, and defied him. When I gaed to the church it was often tae boast hoo I knew a guid sermon, or to find fault wi' a poor one. My family has had a bad example frae me. I have been untrue tae my trust, an' unfaithful tae my God. I am kent this day as 'Reprobate



Rob.' I hae laughed even at deith, and it's hard for me tae seek pardon; and my sins, I remember them this day."

He turned wearily on the lounge and tried to hide his face, which reflected the inward struggle between hope and despair.

"But can ye not do as the old doctor did? He, too, was very sorry, but he trusted God would have mercy on him."

"Cud ye pray for me, doctor, an' I'll try?"

They prayed together that the entrance of the Lord's word might bring light to the one groping in the darkness, that the sick one might have the quiet and consolation of Christ's peace, and the wandering sheep be restored to the fold.

"That's better; I see it clearer noo, an' I hope in his mercy. Come again the morn'."

Some weeks passed before the death angel came, and sweet was the fellowship those two Christian Scotchmen enjoyed together. The sick man's trust was childlike in its simplicity, but it was both clear and strong. His disposition was as completely changed as the mist-covered mountain is by the rising sun. He was cheerfully patient during the remainder of his trying illness, though he had formerly been a sour and irritable man. During Dr. Todd's visits afterward he was most anx-

ious that nothing should interfere with "oor worship," as he termed their devotions together, though, Scotchman like, he was most conservative as to verbal experiences.

One day, shortly before his death, the minister asked him, "Robert, would you not like to give some further expression concerning your changing conditions?"

His only reply to this was to repeat tremblingly, but with great feeling, the oft-quoted psalm which is, beyond all others, peculiarly the Scotchman's psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Knowing his past life, the minister felt a little surprised at this accuracy in the recital of the psalm, and asked:

“Robert, where did you learn that?”

“In the Sabbath school in Lead Hills, when I was sax years auld. And since ye read tae me aboot Dr. McClure and showed me I was wrang, and the Lord’s mercy, it has a’ come back tae me. An’ the things I learned frae my mither and my teachers at the schule when a laddie are my comfort to-day. An’, doctor, some day after I hae gane hame tae them, dinna say I died a saint, but, if ye think it’ll dae any guid, ye might tell hoo Dr. McClure helped to save a soul.”

I have told you this homely, sweet story with the hope that it might show some of you how natural and easy it is to turn to God, with the simplicity of a little child turning to father or mother, and find forgiveness.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SINNER

When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.—*Joshua* vii, 21.

THE army of Israel had turned cowardly in battle, and their hearts melted like water in the face of the enemy. Never was there a braver officer on a battlefield than Joshua. He was every inch a soldier, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. He was heart-broken and in despair at the sudden cowardice of his soldiers. But when he went to God in prayer about it he soon found out where the trouble was. Some of his people had become greedy and had disobeyed the commandment, which had been very strict, that they were not to wage a war for plunder, and that none of the treasures of the enemy were to be seized upon for private gain. So it came about that God revealed to Joshua the secret of the cowardice of Israel.

Nothing will make a people cowardly quicker than to be given over to greed. When Christ went into the country of the Gadarenes and found the man there who was possessed of a legion of devils, and, driving them out of the man, permitted them to go into the herd of swine, after which they drowned themselves in the sea, the hog raisers of that town immediately got up a procession to come out and petition Jesus to leave the country. They could not deny that he cast out devils, but the danger to the pork business made them cowardly. So, in one of these modern cities, if a Christian minister or a Christian church begins to agitate public opinion and arouse Christian sentiment to enforce law against the liquor sellers or drive them out of the community, every man who rents his property for saloons, or gets advertising for his newspaper from the liquor traffic, or is in any way interested in it through his pocket-book, will begin to stir up a procession to persuade the radical representative of Christ to depart out of the town. Let a minister or a church attack gambling and seek to protect the young and unwary from the traps of the gamblers, and it will not only be the thugs and professional gamblers who will cry out against him or them, but you will be astonished to see the respectable, high-toned proprietors of race tracks and pool

rooms who will be arrayed against every earnest defender of the people from the gambler. The cowardly nerve of the people is ever the financial nerve. Let a man have his greed aroused, and, though liberty and humanity and righteousness may bleed and die, the greedy sinner can only gorge himself on the plunder where his heart is set.

But it is to the orderly evolution by which a sinner comes to his ruin that I wish to call special attention. Notice how logically this man Achan, for that was his name, sets forth the pivotal points in his downward career. First he says, "I saw;" next, "I coveted;" and then, "I took." Naturally, after having obtained it, and knowing that he had risked his life in breaking the law, the next step is, "I hid." And then he was discovered, and the end came in his punishment by a horrible death. Go over it again: saw, coveted, took, hid, discovered, punished. There you have it, and it is the story of sin over and over again all along down the history of the race.

Eve "saw" "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and she "saw" that the fruit of it was pleasant to look upon, and she brooded over it, and talked with the devil about it, and then took it and ate of it and gave to Adam—and then what happened? They felt the dawn of guilt in their

consciences. They were ashamed of their nakedness. They tried to make aprons out of fig leaves. They hid away in the shadows of the garden, but that did not silence the voice of God as he cried, "Where art thou?" And they went out from Eden with the flaming sword waving behind them.

Cain "saw" the prosperity of Abel; he "saw" God's pleasure in it and appreciation of his brother's goodness, and he envied his brother. He wanted his brother's blessing without paying the price in goodness. He brooded about it. The more he thought it over, the more he hated Abel. Then he went and tried to pick a quarrel with him, and, when Abel would not quarrel, the very sweetness and innocence of his brother's face seemed to stab him like a dagger. Then he killed him, and became a vagabond on the face of the earth.

Joseph's brethren listened to the prattle of the young lad about his dreams of the sheaves that bowed down to him, and the stars that made obeisance, and were filled with envy and jealousy. They brooded over it, until one day they "saw" that coat of many colors glistening in the sun as he came over the hills with his father's message. They seized upon him and sold him into slavery. They lied to the old father. They covered up their



sin by an oath of secrecy. They kept it covered for twenty years, but in the counting room of Pharaoh in Egypt, when famine had driven them into a strange land, the ghost of the wronged boy came back and stared them in the face, and they cried, with anguish, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother!"

Ahab "saw" Naboth's vineyard and wanted to buy it; and when it was not for sale he still coveted it, and brooded over it until he winked at Jezebel's wicked murder of its owner. Then he entered into possession and was happy for a time; but justice did not sleep, the Nemesis was on his track, and at the very spot where Naboth was slain the arrow found its way into Ahab's body, and the dogs licked up the blood that oozed out of his war chariot.

Samson "saw" Delilah and was fascinated by her brilliancy and beauty and dash of spirit, and was lured into sin. Again and again, in contemptuous strength, he escaped out of the meshes that were laid for him; but the day came when his strength vanished, though at the time he knew it not. His eyes were put out; the great arms, that could rend a young lion as though it were a kid, were chained to grind at the mill like some poor donkey; and he who had been the hope and promise of a great people, their glory and their pride,

became the slave and the laughingstock of his enemies.

You see there is a great law running through all human history, and our text is only in harmony with that law. Sin in you, if unchecked, unrepented of, unforgiven, will run the same sure and deadly career, and end in destruction.

Let us take it up for a moment, point by point. "I saw." But you say, "How could he help it?" Often a man can help it. I have no doubt that many soldiers that day were so desperately in earnest to win victory that they took no note of silver or gold or fine garments. A man is likely to see what he is looking for. Two men walk down the street, and one sees books and pictures and elevating things. They attract his attention and win his interest. The other man sees a saloon sign and snuffs the fumes of liquor through the door, or he sees something that awakens evil passion or feeds an impure thought already in his mind. And yet I do not wish to be understood as teaching that the temptation is always our own fault. Every one of us will be tempted. The disciple is not greater than his Lord, and he was cruelly tempted. The great point is how we shall treat the temptation. The fatal blunder Achan made was in permitting himself to remain gazing at those forbidden treas-

ures, thus giving his covetousness a chance to grow and fatten until it overcame his will. The breeding place of sin is in the imagination. No man will ever commit a sin unless he first allows it to nest in his heart. People meditate on sins which fascinate them by their appearance. A man beholds with eye or thought what he knows to be wrong, to be a sin against God, contrary to the divine law, and yet it charms him. He says to himself, "If it were only right for me to do it, how great would be the joy." And then, instead of thrusting it out of his mind, he continues to think about it; he turns it over and over again, like a sweet morsel, in his imagination. He pictures himself committing the sin, and every time he does so he is the more fascinated by it. As he thinks about it the promised pleasures of the sin become more and more attractive, while the ugly, repulsive side is lost to view. And thus days may go on, possibly weeks and months, until an opportunity comes for the sin to be committed; and then, suddenly as a panther which has been crouching over a traveler's path, waiting hungrily through all the hours of the afternoon until he shall come back at night from his toil, leaps like a flash of lightning on his victim, so sin which a man has been getting ready to do, by weeks and months of thought and

meditation, suddenly becomes a horrible and soul-blighting reality.

The moment the sin is committed there is born in the wicked conscience a desire to hide it, to cover it up and conceal it from view—not only from the view of the world, but from the view of the soul itself and from the view of God. But this is impossible. There are a great many things that a man has not reckoned with when he commits a sin. He has done violence to his own will. He has unleashed a violent passion or appetite. He has been conquered once, and this enemy of his soul has gained the prestige of victory and is now domineering and insolent toward him. Conscience wounded will ever and anon rise up to rebuke him, and God is never deluded for a moment.

It is said that General Kitchener, the hero of Omdurman, knows the Oriental languages almost perfectly. At one of his army camps on the Nile two Arab date-sellers were arrested as suspected spies, and were confined in the guard tent. Shortly afterward a third Arab prisoner was hastily bundled into the tent. An animated jabbering ensued between the three, and in a few minutes, much to the astonishment of the sentry, the latest arrival drew aside the doorway and stepped out, remarking, "All right, sentry ; I am going to the general."

It was Kitchener. Again only a few minutes passed when an orderly hurried up and a spade was handed to each of the two Arabs, who were then marched outside the lines, made to dig their own graves, and were then shot. They were very dangerous spies and Kitchener had detected them.

So there is a traitor bundled into our own tent. Our own conscience will bear swift testimony against us if we sin against God.

But some of you are conscious of your sin and are sorry for it. Achan found no place for repentance. He died a shameful and disgraceful death. That is the natural outcome of sin. If unforgiven it always ends in that. "The wages of sin is death." "A man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." That is the natural logic of a sinful course. How many there are that go on to that fearful end. But, thank God, it need not be so with you! You may this very hour repent of your sins and turn from them to Christ, who is able and willing to forgive them, and give you a glad and joyous consciousness that your sins are blotted out and will be remembered against you no more forever.

Mr. Moody tells the story of a man in one of his

meetings who had been brought there against his will, through some personal influence. When he got there they were singing:

“Come! oh, come to Me!  
Weary, heavy-laden,  
Come! oh, come to Me!”

He said afterward he thought he never saw so many fools together in his life before. The idea of a number of men standing there singing, “Come! come! come!” When he started home he could not get this little word out of his head; it kept coming back all the time. He went into a saloon and ordered some whisky, thinking to drown it. But it kept coming back. He drank more whisky; but the words kept ringing in his ears. He said to himself, “What a fool I am for allowing myself to be troubled in this way!” He had another glass, and finally got home. He went off to bed, but could not sleep; it seemed as if the very pillow kept whispering, “Come! come!” “What a fool I was for ever going to that meeting at all!” he muttered. When he got up he took the little hymn book, found the hymn, and read it over. “What nonsense!” he said to himself; “the idea of a rational man being disturbed by that hymn.” He set fire to the hymn book, but could not burn up the little word

"Come!" He declared he would never go to another meeting; but the next night he came again. Strange to say, they were singing the same hymn. "There is that miserable old hymn again," he complained. "What a fool I am for coming." Some time afterward that man arose in a meeting of young converts and told this story. Pulling out the little hymn book—for he had bought another copy—and opening it at this hymn, he said: "I think this hymn is the sweetest and best in the English language. God blessed it to the saving of my soul."

Christ is still calling. Come to him and be saved!



## CHAPTER XVI

A CAPTAIN WITH HIS FOOT ON THE NECK OF  
A KING

Put your feet upon the necks of these kings.—*Joshua*  
x, 24.

THE five mountain kings, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, had all gathered their armies together to fight against the men of Gibeon, in the new territory which had been allotted to them in the land of Canaan. They were threatened with destruction by this powerful coalition, and sent a most urgent appeal to Joshua to come to their relief. He did so at once, and with his accustomed valor and dash brought about a great victory that scattered the enemy in confusion. In the midst of their overwhelming defeat the five mountain kings of the Amorites, in order to save themselves from destruction, hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua would not stop for them at the time, but ordered some of the soldiers to roll great stones into the mouth of the cave, as though they were penning up a wolf run to earth,

and so he let them wait until the battle was over. When the victory was won, and the army had come back to Makkedah, he ordered the cave to be opened and the five kings to be brought out before him. The scene that was then enacted is one of the most dramatic in all history. Picture it for yourself. About are the victorious hosts, fresh from battle. Dragged out from the cave are the proud but humiliated and broken kings of the Amorites. They are led out before Joshua, and compelled to lie down upon the ground. Then Joshua called on all the captains which went with him to the battle and commanded them, saying, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." Afterward the kings were hanged on five trees, and their bodies were cast into the cave where they had hid themselves, and great stones were rolled back again to the cave's mouth. Thus in selecting their hiding-place they had selected their tomb as well.

Joshua has already spiritualized this picture for us. We cannot do better than follow his example. There are other kings that make war on the sons

of God, that ought to be treated in the same way that Joshua treated these. There are wicked habits, there are giant sins, the measure of whose power is so great that they may be well compared to kings. If we are to build up a good character, and live in purity and peace, we must fight these kings of evil to the death. We shall never be safe until we have trampled them underfoot. The great trouble is that men parley with their sins when they ought to kill them. No Spanish diplomat was ever so dilatory or so wily in securing advantages through parley as are the giant sins that plead in our hearts to retain some sort of standing with us.

I never shall forget an experience I had last Thanksgiving morning. I came to the church very early, but early as I was I found waiting for me a young man who asked me at the door if I had such a thing as a temperance pledge that he could sign. I told him I could soon write one, and took him into my study. He was a young man of large and splendid physique, well dressed, used excellent language, had a frank, open countenance, and gave every outward proof of being far above the average in ability and manliness. Yet he told me his story with sobs and tears. He had given way to strong drink. He had a good position as a travel-

ing man for a commercial house, which he feared he would lose through drunkenness. He had gone out to a neighboring town a few days before, and though he had not drank for months until that day, he was persuaded to take a single glass of beer, and from that on had been drunk for a week and had not even sought to do business. He was the only son of a widowed mother that lived in a Western city. It would break her heart if he should be broken down and destroyed. His cry was, "What can I do?" "I have tried over and over again," said he, "quit for weeks and even months at a time, and then I am swept off of my feet like this in a moment, and all my good resolutions go down in debauch."

I had another man come to me this week who has had a somewhat similar experience. He, too, is a big, strong, broad-shouldered, fine-looking man. He inherited a taste for strong drink. He was hedged away from it in his early youth, but in opening manhood fell into the hands of his enemies. Sorrow and misfortune came to him, and for a time he gave himself up to it and tried to drown his troubles. How many a man has tried to drown his troubles in strong drink, but has succeeded only in drowning himself and taking his troubles, augmented a thousandfold, with him!

After a while, however, conscience was aroused and he was awakened to make a fight against the enemy. He vowed to himself that he would stop his evil way and dethrone this tyrannical king. But right here he made his great blunder. He was urged at this time to come out openly for Christ; to confess his sins and to throw himself completely on the Lord's side as a soldier of Jesus Christ; but the devil whispered to him and said, "You had better wait a year or two, and see whether you are going to be able to keep these new resolutions which you have made. Many another man," said the tempter, "has made the same kind of promises to himself and fallen back in a few weeks to be worse than ever. If you join the church, let everybody know your determination, and then should get to drinking again, you would bring shame and disgrace not only on yourself, but on the church. Stay out until you are sure you can stand." Now that sounds very plausible, and the devil has ruined thousands of men and women with that specious philosophy.

Well, this young man I am telling you about, who came to see me this week, took the devil's advice instead of the preacher's, and went on trying to fight his own battles. He succeeded in keeping sober for several months, but finally, in an un-

guarded hour, he went down, and a two weeks' debauch followed. Shamed and humiliated, he came trembling back to himself, like the prodigal among the husks of the swineherd, and tried again. This time he only went about three months, and down again he went into the mire and filth, trodden under foot by his sin. Then he came to me with his tale of sorrow and despair.

I said to both these men what I have said to thousands of men—not only in public congregations, but singly, in heart-searching and sometimes heart-breaking conversations—that there was only one chance, and that was to cease parleying with the tyrant who had so shamed and disgraced them, and who held them in such cruel slavery; to trample him underfoot, hang him to the death, bury him out of sight, with the stones of God's promises piled against his tomb forever. If they follow that advice they will be saved men, and there is a future for them, bright and glorious, as the sons of God. If they reject it they will die in the gutter and go down to a drunkard's hell.

But that is not the only king that tyrannizes over enslaved souls and makes war on men who ought to be living as the sons of God. Sin is rebellion against God; it is refusal to keep God's law, refusal to give him loving service; and whether it be ugly,

loathsome, repulsive forms of sin, or clothed in fashionable garments made attractive and kingly as an angel of light, it is still the same hideous thing, and works the same horrid results on the human soul. The skull and the crossbones are ever the only true badge for sin; for God's word is true, that "the wages of sin is death."

The message which I wish to bring to you with all the power that I have is this: If you will fight against your sin, if you will make war against it—open, earnest, aggressive war; not war carried on in secret, but war that is avowed and declared to all the world, war waged with sharp sword to the very death—then you may be sure that you will soon run your enemy to the earth, and it will be hiding like these kings of the Amorites in the cave.

If you are going to fight your sin it is never wise to dally with it. Wisdom lies in being up and at it. Barney Barnato, the Kaffir "diamond king," gave it as his opinion that he won his great financial success because of his aggressiveness. He said: "If you are going to fight, always get in the first blow. If a man is going to hit you, hit him first, and say, 'If you try that I'll hit you again.' It is of no use for you to stand off and say, 'If you hit me I'll hit you back.'" What was policy in the



diamond merchant is high wisdom on the part of the man who is going to make war on a wicked habit or a sinful appetite that threatens his moral safety. Don't quarrel or hold debate with it; stamp the neck underfoot and swing it to the first tree. Commit yourself openly before all the world as a man or woman at war with the devil.

A lady, while giving the finishing touches to a table spread for a dinner party, heard the patter of naked feet upon the stairs. Surmising that her little daughter was probably bent on plundering the dessert, she hid herself behind the window curtains and watched the proceedings. The child, in her nightdress, came into the room, climbed up on a chair, helped herself deliberately to a fine peach, and went off with her booty. The mother felt very sad, and began to consider how she should punish her little girl. Presently she again heard the same patter of feet, and hid herself as before. The child clambered into the chair, replaced the fruit, triumphantly ejaculating, "That's one on you, Mr. Devil!" and trotted off to bed in peace. She had experienced the truth of the apostle's declaration that if we resist the devil he will flee from us.

What some of you need is to be roused up to make war on your sin. You are not now fighting

against it. O, I know what you would say: "I am ashamed of my sin; there are hours in which I loathe it and abominate it more than you can imagine; there are times when, if I could burn it out of my heart at the loss of a right arm or a right eye, I would not hesitate; and I have not really given up to it. I don't intend for a moment to die in my sins and give up to everlasting defeat." And yet while you feel that way about it, you are going on ever and anon yielding to sin, bearing its unholy yoke, living with God's condemnation against sin hanging over your head, living so that if sudden death should come you would be lost forever; living so that if you were suddenly cut off in your sins they would banish you from the presence of God through all eternity; and yet, conscious of this, you do not rouse yourself to fight your sin, to trample it underfoot and strangle it to death.

When the men of Gibeon had to face these five kings of the Amorites, they called for Joshua because they knew he had wisdom and courage and strength and reinforcements enough to lead them to victory. A man who is fighting his sin must call on our Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can help you to put your foot on the neck of all the evil kings that make war on your soul.

He is a leader who never gets discouraged. There never was a greater thing said about Christ than that which was foretold of him by the prophet, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." And he never was discouraged. He came down to earth and tasted our grief and our sorrow, but no one ever found him once with "the blues." He saw mankind at its worst; he saw their hypocrisies, their ingratitude, their selfishness; but he was not discouraged in them, and went on, ever seeing the vision of the day when all the devils should be overthrown and destroyed. Not Peter's denial, not even Judas's treachery, could discourage Jesus Christ. Pilate could scourge him till from loss of blood he a little later fainted under his cross; but he could not discourage him. Nailed to the cross, he suffered, he thirsted, he prayed, and died, but he was not discouraged. On Easter morning the angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher, the Roman guard fled in terror, and the undiscouraged Christ came forth for evermore the victor over death and the grave. O my dear friends, you who have fought single-handed against your evil passions, your sinful longing, your wicked habits, and have been defeated again and again until you have become discouraged and ready to give up, call for

help, I beg you, upon the Christ, who has never yet been defeated or discouraged.

When you come into touch with him you will catch his spirit, you will breathe his courage, and acquire his habit of victory. It is said that on one occasion the Duke of Wellington—whom they called the "Iron Duke"—assigned to one of his veteran soldiers a very dangerous and difficult task. The man did not shrink from danger or duty, but his reply was, "I go, sir; but first give me a grip of your conquering hand."

O my brother, my sister, discouraged and defeated by your sin, come, I beg you, and enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ. Get a grip of his conquering hand. You will feel new life running through all your moral nature. It will electrify your will; it will arouse your love and gratitude; it will clothe you with the spirit of a conqueror.

## CHAPTER XVII

## THE SCARLET LINE IN THE WINDOW

And she bound the scarlet line in the window.—*Joshua* ii, 21.

HERE is a story full of human interest. Two soldiers are spying out the land which is to be captured by their army. They are hunted, and in their emergency, when their lives hang on a thread, a woman comes to their rescue. She had been a bad woman, and her sins had not been covered up, but were known to all her little world. But she was a bright woman, and had come, in some way, to have more information about this army of Israel than most of the people of her city. She had heard enough about them and their history to believe in their God, and to have faith that he had power to give them success in taking possession of the land in which she lived. So when she saw these two spies hunted and in danger of death, she gladly risked her own life to befriend them, hoping thereby not only to do a kind deed to them, but to obtain protection for herself and for her family

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when the city should be taken by the enemy. She hid the men on the top of her house as long as she dared, and then tied a scarlet cord about them, one at a time, and let them down over the wall of the city. What a picture it is! I suppose that one of the spies helped her lower the first man to the ground, but when the next man's turn came Rahab alone was left to support his weight, and I can see her as she braces herself and with all her strength grips the cord in her hands until it cuts into her fingers as she lowers the spy in safety to the earth.

The men were grateful for her kindness and were glad to pledge to her protection for the future, and so they said in answer to her appeal, "When we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. . . . And whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him." And we are assured by the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that wonderful roll-call of the heroes of the faith, that the army of Israel respected the pledge that had been given by these two spies, and that Rahab was saved when the city was captured.

We have suggested in this story a fact which is apparent often, that the people who seem to be the worst are sometimes the first to perceive their danger and turn away from their sins. Christ said that the publicans and sinners had a better chance of salvation in his day than the scribes and the Pharisees, and the same fact is often witnessed in our own time. No one of us will be acquitted at last by what we have done, for we have all come short of our privileges and have sins to answer for before God. If we are saved it will be because we have been forgiven of our sins through Jesus Christ. It is not justice which we want, but a pardon. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." The law of God can never forgive us. Only through the pardon of God, given us because we have taken Jesus Christ as our Saviour and tied the scarlet thread of his dying blood in our window, can we ever be saved from the penalty of the law.

A Confederate soldier belonging to the army of northern Virginia was on trial before a military court for desertion. His name was Edward Cooper, and when he rose to plead he answered, "Not guilty." The judge advocate asked, "Who is your counsel?" He replied, "I have no counsel." Supposing that it was Cooper's purpose to



represent himself before the court, the judge advocate was instructed to proceed. Every charge and specification against the prisoner was sustained. The prisoner was then told to introduce his witnesses. He said, "I have none." Astonished at the calmness with which he seemed to be submitting to what he regarded as inevitable fate, the judge advocate said to him, "Have you no defense? Is it possible that you abandoned your comrades and deserted your colors in the presence of the enemy without any reason?"

He answered, "There was a reason, but it will not avail me before a military court."

The judge then said, "Perhaps you are mistaken; you are charged with the highest crime known to military law, and it is your duty to make known the causes that influenced your actions."

For the first time Cooper's manly form trembled and his eyes swam in tears. Approaching the president of the court he presented a letter, saying as he did so, "There, general, is what did it."

General Battle opened the letter, and in a moment his eyes filled with tears. It was passed from one to another of the court until all had seen it, and those stern warriors, who had passed with Stonewall Jackson through a score of battles, wept like children. As soon as the president sufficiently

recovered his self-possession he read the letter as the defense of the prisoner. It was in these words:

“DEAR EDWARD: I have always been proud of you; since your connection with the Confederate army I have been prouder of you than ever before. I would not have you do anything wrong for the world; but, before God, Edward, unless you come home we must die! Last night I was aroused by little Eddie’s crying, ‘O mamma, I’m so hungry!’ And Lucy, Edward, your darling Lucy, never complains, but grows thinner and thinner every day. And, before God, Edward, unless you come home we must die. Your MARY.”

Turning to the prisoner, General Battle asked, “What did you do when you received this letter?”

He replied, “I made application for a furlough, and it was rejected; I made another application, and it was rejected; a third time I made application, and it was rejected; and that night, as I wandered backward and forward in the camp thinking of my home, the wild eyes of Lucy looking up to me, the burning words of Mary sinking in my brain, I was no longer the Confederate soldier; I was the father of Lucy and the husband of Mary, and I would have passed those lines if every gun in the battery had been fired upon me.

"When I arrived home Mary ran out to meet me, and embraced me and whispered, 'O Edward, I am so happy; I am so glad you got your furlough.' She must have felt me shudder, for she turned as pale as death and, catching her breath with every word, she said, 'Have you come without your furlough? O Edward, go back! Go back! Let me and the children go down to the grave together; but for heaven's sake save the honor of your name!'

"And here I am, gentlemen; not brought here by military power, but in obedience to the command of Mary, to abide the sentence of your court."

Every officer of that court-martial felt the force of the prisoner's words. Before them stood in beatific vision the eloquent pleader for a husband's and a father's wrong; but they had been trained by the great leader, Robert E. Lee, to tread the path of duty though the lightning-flash scorched the ground beneath their feet, and each in his turn pronounced the verdict, "Guilty."

Fortunately for humanity, the proceedings of the court were reviewed by the commanding general, and upon the record was written:

"The finding of the court approved. The prisoner is pardoned and will report to his company.

"R. E. LEE, General."

This story illustrates with great clearness how that, in strict justice, the guilty never can escape. No one here could have so good a plea to excuse his sin against God as this man had to excuse his desertion. But there was no chance for his acquittal by a just court. His only chance was the pardon of the commanding general, and our only hope, as sinners against God, is the pardon of the Great Commander. But Jesus Christ has shed his own blood on the cross as a propitiation for our sins, and wherever that scarlet thread appears above the window of the heart, God will guarantee to us forgiveness and protection.

I would like to lay emphasis on the part of a sinner in his own salvation. Rahab with her own hands let the spies down over the wall, and with those same hands she bound the scarlet cord in the window. There is a sense in which our salvation is wrought out for us, and there is another sense, equally as important, in which we may be said to "work out our own salvation." Our salvation does not hinge on the will of God, but upon our own will. God is willing to save us, and is seeking to persuade us to accept salvation. We must take hold upon it with our own hands. The Christian life is not passive or negative, but a positive seizing hold of eternal life.

In asking you to accept Christ I am not inviting you to a monotonous existence, but I am urging you to take hold on a triumphant and joyous career. I am asking you also to join hands with the very best people who live on the earth, and this not only in living a good life yourself, but in seeking to lift all men up to a better life. Julia Thayer sings:

“The hands of the world—can’t you see them to-day?  
 The useless white hands, kept so shapely and fair;  
 The hands of God’s worker, one lifted to pray,  
 And one reaching down for the burdens of care;  
 The hardened brown hands, so deformed and unsightly,  
 Yet beautiful still with the pathos of toil;  
 And the great hands of power, used wrongly or rightly;  
 The hands stained with sinning, from which you recoil;  
 The cultured, deft hands that are busy adorning  
 The unfinished temples of learning and art;  
 The hands in dark places that grope for the morning,  
 And the poor, stricken hands that appeal to the heart;  
 All these, if they’d clasp one another to-day,  
 Could reach ’round the world in a wonderful way.

“No one would be lonely, no lot wholly dreary,  
 The thrill of our love would, magnetlike, give  
 A strength to the faint and a joy to the weary,  
 A lightness of being and courage to live.  
 Then come, clasp these hands—Oh, how selfish to tarry  
 When all the world needs you this moment so much!  
 Rise with the will and a purpose to carry  
 The help of your presence, the warmth of your touch.

They want yours, the hands that drop low in their weakness,

Those heavy with burdens or empty with loss;  
 They pray you to point with the spirit of meekness  
 To Love's Burden-bearer who died on the cross.  
 We all so much need one another to-day  
 To girdle the globe with our hands in this way."

I appeal to the very best that is in you that you cease your ungrateful course in refusing Christ your love and your service, and that you give him, from this hour, the use of your hand and your voice, and the love of your heart, and receive from him in turn not only the forgiveness of your sins, but the uplifting of his divine fellowship. As another has said, there are two courses open to the sinner. He may stifle or destroy for the time the thoughts and the feelings which mar his peace, or else a yearning, a longing, almost a demand, for relief shapes itself within him. Such a demand is the cry of the conscience, "What must I do to be saved?"

"Thou who hast borne all burdens, bear our load!  
 Bear thou our load, whatever load it be;  
 Our guilt, our shame, our helpless misery.  
 Bear thou who only canst, O God, my God;  
 Seek us and find us, for we cannot thee."

If there be any soul here that has sympathy with that cry, hear the message of the Gospel, "Believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Or yet again, "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

Sidney Watson, a converted London waif, now a popular author of Christian books in England, relates that while a prisoner in the East Indies he had as fellow-prisoner an old Scotch soldier who, after traveling over half the globe, was there dying. From a period of unconsciousness he opened his eyes and glanced around as if surprised at his surroundings, murmuring brokenly, "I thought me in my mither's cot in Perthshire." After a pause, with a quiet, fixed, peaceful look heavenward he gasped, "Nae ither name—one Mediator—Jesus Christ—he is faithful—just—forgive sin." His mind wandered again for a moment, but his soldier training came back to him and he tried to raise his head as he said, short and sharp, with a dying energy, "Password? Yes! Blood of Christ—Christ cleanseth from all sin." A thrill passed through his frame, and the watchers knew that he had passed the guard into the presence of the King.

There is only one password into eternal glory, and that is the "Blood of Christ." Bind the scarlet thread in the window of your heart and be at peace.



## CHAPTER XVIII

POETIC JUSTICE AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE TRAGIC  
STORY OF ADONI-BEZEK

As I have done, so God hath requited me.—*Judges i, 7.*

ADONI-BEZEK was a cruel old man. He lived by the sword and he perished by it. For a long time nobody could stand against him in battle. Everything went his way. Victory after victory crowned his banners. The story of the wars of Adoni-bezek have never been written. We have only the little glimpse into them from this statement of his, that seventy kings that had been captured by him had been put to torture, and had been humiliated and mortified, by having their thumbs and their great toes cut off and by being made to pick up crumbs under his table, as one might feed a hungry dog. The imagination can easily supply the long tales of war and ravage that lie in the darkness of oblivion behind those threescore and ten kings and their cruel humiliation.

But Adoni-bezek's time was coming. There came a day when the lucky star in which he boasted

forsook him, and the stars in their courses seemed to fight against him. He was captured, and very naturally his captors, remembering the stories of the peculiar torture to which he had been accustomed to put his captives—stories that had given him an inglorious fame throughout all the neighboring nations—submitted him to the same humiliation.

Adoni-bezek, with all his savagery, must have had the philosophic temperament, for he recognizes at once the poetic justice in his punishment. He does not complain when he is himself brutally tortured in the same way in which he had treated others. With very clear discrimination he recognizes that his sinful life had not only been a warfare against his fellow-men, but a sin against God. He sees clearly that in this punishment which comes to him at the hand of his captors they are not the chief factors. It is coming from the hand of God. "As I have done," says the despairing old king—and it seems to have been the last utterance of his life, for the next sentence tells of his death—"so God hath requited me."

I think there is something striking in the consensus of opinion that a justice which metes out punishment of the same peculiar kind as the man's sin should be called "poetic justice." If a man in

his youth has been mean and ungrateful toward his parents, and treated them harshly, and years afterward, when his own hair is getting gray, his children turn against him with hard and selfish hearts, people say it is "poetic justice." If a man is miserly and greedy and dishonest in business, gathering money without caring how he gets it, unscrupulous in his methods, and some competitor, equally unscrupulous but with more cunning, circumvents him, and robs him of his ill-gotten gains, people are inclined to smile and say it is "poetic justice." We say so because we recognize that poetic justice is ideal justice, and that this is a rare thing in this world among men. But justice is always poetic with God. God does not have a judgment day every week, but at last there shall be meted out poetic justice to every man and woman in the world.

This tells as truly on the side of goodness and its rewards as in the punishment of evil. God gives a man blessings in heart and soul after the kind of his deeds of righteousness. I shall never forget the glow of supreme joy and comfort I saw recently in the glistening eyes and lighted face of a man of nearly fourscore, who was telling me about his coming to this country when only a youth, leaving the dear old mother, who had been a faithful

Christian mother to him, in England. He came over here and was lonesome and homesick, and in that hour of homesickness he gave his heart to Christ and became a very happy Christian. With joyous face he told me how he wrote home to his mother about it, and how happy she was, and how she prized those letters, and how proud she was of them, and how, when she came to die, she showed her great love for him and her appreciation of him by making a dying request that all the letters from her boy in the new land should be put as a pillow under her head in her coffin. And all the years since, as that man has gone on doing his work in the world, growing old like the palm tree described in the Bible, his heart has been given courage and his soul has been refreshed by the joy with which he had comforted his mother's heart.

Be sure that this is God's world, and there is no such thing as chance. It is no gambler's luck with which we are dealing. We are not throwing dice with fate in these human lives of ours. It is no haphazard at which we are playing. It is a world of cause and effect, a world where like produces like, a world where we shall receive according to our conduct. We have here a lesson for every one of us. God is no respecter of persons. He does not have one standard for the treatment of Adoni-

bezek and another for us. The great principles of right and wrong run through the universe like threads through a bolt of cloth. They are the same in one age as in another. A sowing of envy and jealousy will produce strife and murder as surely now as in the days of Cain. A seedtime of hard-heartedness and stiff-necked resistance to God's commandment will still further harden the heart and prevent the day of repentance as surely in our day as in the time of Pharaoh and the plagues in Egypt. Cruelty will breed cruelty and perpetuate it as certainly in Cleveland as in the empire of Adoni-bezek.

We should remember that no sin is a separate and individual thing, having no relation to the other portions of our career. Every sin is a seed that is self-perpetuating, and produces still further evil harvest to sow still more widely the spirit of anarchy and rebellion against God.

There is this other very important thought in our text: Our sin is not merely bad policy, or mistake of judgment, or even a wrong done against our fellow-men. It is a sin against God. Sin is contempt for our Creator, our Father, our Preserver, our Judge. I think there is a vast amount of teaching in our time which rather fosters the idea that sin is more bad policy than anything else,

and the keen edge is lost off the truth that sin is a crime against God that merits and requires punishment. Of course it is true that sin is unwise, that it is a bad policy; true that drunkenness wastes physical strength, unbalances the mind, depraves the heart; true that greed despoils all the finer feelings of the soul, and brutalizes the manhood and womanhood; true that lust dethrones the spiritual, and puts the reins of life into the hands of the animal; true that falsehood demoralizes all the strength of the personality, and lets loose the mental and moral nature into chaos; true that the sinner can never tell when conscience will rise up and betray him, even in this world, to destruction. But while all that is true, it is the smaller part of the ruin which sin works. Sin is crime against God, it is a wrong against the moral nature itself, it is a violation of the very law of our being, and makes necessary a judgment day and a time of punishment.

Old Adoni-bezek was thoroughly scriptural in his idea that his captors were, though entirely unconscious, no doubt, themselves, God's agents, who were requiting him according to his deeds for his evil ways. Judgment is as surely coming for the sinner to-day as to this hoary-headed sinner of ancient times. How strange that we should go on

sinning against God as though no record were being kept of our doings. Yet there is a double record being kept. First, a record is being kept in our own memories, in the very fiber of our being. A record is being treasured up there that will be all the more legible when the body shall be left behind, like an old house, and we stand unsheltered before God. But there is another record being kept in the memory of God, a record which is absolutely perfect and from which there can be no appeal.

One day a young boy came home very angry with a schoolmate about something that had happened on the playground. He told his sister about it, and the more he thought and talked of it the angrier he grew, and he began to say terribly harsh, bitter, and unreasonable things about his comrade. Some of the things he said the sister knew were not true; but he was too angry and excited to weigh his words. She listened for a moment and then said very gently:

“Would you dare tell God that, Ralph?”

The boy paused as if someone had struck him. He felt the rebuke implied in her words, and he realized how wickedly and untruthfully he had spoken.

“No, I wouldn’t tell God that,” he said, with a red face.



"Then I wouldn't tell it to anybody," said the sister.

And yet we are telling God every angry, unreasonable, wicked thing we say. We are telling him every unholy purpose we form, every stubborn resistance to his will. What a cruel treasury we may gather for ourselves in this way.

We have suggested to us here that we are judged by our deeds and not by our impulses or our wishes. Some people deceive their own hearts by imagining that there is, in some vague, undefined way, virtue in their hours of daydreams when they have visions of goodness, which, alas! are never fulfilled. Many people are like the son mentioned in the Gospel parable, who, when his father commanded him to go and work in his vineyard, replied promptly, "I go, sir," but who never went. There was absolutely no value in that boy's complacent impulse to do what his father wanted, but who, when the time came for action, chose to go selfishly on his own path. So many people now are answering God, "I go, sir," but they never go. Many read a book which stirs their emotions in regard to some misery of the poor, and they seem to hear the voice of God in it, saying to them, "Go, heal the heartache, relieve the distress, brighten the sky of those whose lives are dark and cheerless." And

they say promptly, "I go, sir." But they wipe their tears, and their emotion passes, and their lives go on as selfishly as ever. Again, some sudden disaster, or some striking punishment following iniquity, startles the community, and many people read it with blanched faces and trembling hearts as they picture to themselves the murder, or the suicide, or the bankruptcy, or the shame and disgrace, or the heart-breaking agony that has followed like a Nemesis in the wake of some man's or some woman's sin. Conscience rises up and says, "He was no greater sinner than you. He thought his sin would never be punished; but his judgment day came and yours hastens; rise up at once and repent of your sins, and turn from your wicked ways." And the soul answers, "I go, sir," but the emotion dies away, conscience is thrust into the background, the world comes in like a flood, and no real repentance comes from it.

I know that I am not speaking in riddles to you. I am not telling you things you do not understand. Some of you, as you have listened, have seen your own portrait in the rude and simple sketches I have drawn. In God's name, do not let this appeal go the way of all the rest. You have been aroused many times before to the exceeding sinfulness of your sin, and have promised yourself to repent,

only to fall the deeper into the mire. Put every good impulse into action now. Incarnate your good wishes into deeds. Rise up by the grace of God to repent of your sin and to cry out to Jesus Christ for refuge. In him is your hope, not because he can change the character of sin, but because he took your load of sin on his own shoulders and suffered in your stead, and if you accept him as your Saviour, God will impute your sin to him. He will transfer your guilt to Christ's account, and you may be pardoned and forgiven. The sense of guilt will be taken out of your soul and you will go forth, free and cleansed, to lead a new life of righteousness and peace.

No matter how hard a place you are in, Christ is able to reach you there, and lead you out of your distress.

Samuel H. Hadley, superintendent of the old Jerry McAuley Water Street Mission, New York, now one of the purest and noblest of men, was once a poor drunkard in the gutter. When he had pawned his last thing, and the alternative faced him of becoming a tramp or jumping in the river, he found his way to the mission, and this is his recollection of the prayer which Jerry McAuley offered over his bowed head: "Dear Saviour, won't you look down in pity on this poor soul? He needs

your help, Lord. He can't get along without it. Blessed Jesus, this sinner has got himself into a bad hole. Won't you help him out?"

Then, with Jerry's hand upon his head, Hadley tried to pray for himself: "Dear Jesus, can you help me?" The gloom that had filled him gave way to a precious feeling of safety and strength, and he has lived a glorious life ever since. There was a scriptural warrant for that prayer of McAuley's. Does not David say, "He inclined unto me, and heard me cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God?" He will do all that for you if you will give him your hand and your heart.

## CHAPTER XIX

## THE SINNER'S FIGHT AGAINST THE STARS

They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.—*Judges v, 20.*

THE immediate cause of the utterance of this poetic and often-quoted text was probably Deborah's remembrance of a terrific thunderstorm in which the flash of the lightning and the roar of the thunder added materially to the confusion of the horses attached to the war chariots of Sisera. There is an indication of this in the twenty-second verse, where the destruction of the enemy at the river Kishon is being described, and it is said, "Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones." This storm, which seemed to bring the forces of the skies into the battle, is taken advantage of by Deborah and Barak in their song of victory, and is used with sublime poetic effect. There is probably not a passage in the Bible more frequently quoted by great orators dealing with the theme of the onward sweep of righteousness and the inherent weakness of a bad cause.

The text is susceptible of a very much deeper meaning than the one I have suggested as the probable cause of its utterance, and there is no doubt that in the heart of the singers there was the faith that God himself had marshaled the heavens above to fight in defense of his people and to insure the overthrow of their powerful enemy. Our theme, then, is very simple and easy to be understood. If a man is doing right he may be sure that God is on his side. So long as we are obedient to God in nature and in grace, in physical as well as in spiritual realms, we may be certain that all the forces of the universe are marshaled on our side. Paul must have had this thought in his mind when he said, "All things work together for good to them that love God." On the other hand, if we do wrong, if we disobey God, we put ourselves out of joint, so to speak, with the universe of which we are a part. While goodness means harmony, wickedness means discord. The man who sins against God puts all the forces of the universe at war against himself. Things that seemed to be very far away from him, and to have no interest in him, become his enemies, and achieve his overthrow, when he puts himself in antagonism to the righteous laws of God's government.

The man who does right, who lives in obedience

to God, finds hidden treasure laid up for him in unexpected places all along the path of life, because everything is working for his advantage; while the man who sins against God walks a path that is ambushed by unknown enemies who are likely to spring upon him to his destruction at an unthought-of moment.

Sisera stands as a representative of those who fight against God. He seems to have been a brilliant fellow, a strong personality, a man full of vigor, and with many of those qualities which make one a leader among men. But he despised the God who had so thoroughly given evidence of his favor toward the people of Israel. Every advantage seemed to be on his side; he had military prestige, he was a great general with a famous name, he had a large army finely equipped for those days; but the people who fought against him had God on their side, and he went down in destruction before a force against which he was powerless to contend.

We may see in the death of Sisera a suggestion, also, of the great truth that the glamour which seems to surround sin in the distance is all lost in the shame and humiliation of the reality. A soldier, if he must die, longs to die on the battlefield at the head of his men, leading them to victory. How the heart of the world has caught up the death



of the young and intrepid Wolfe at the capture of Quebec! The artist and the poet and the historian have made the most of those last words of the brilliant young soldier who was dying, but whose spirit was recalled for a moment, seemingly, by the news of victory, and he exclaimed, "Then I die content!"

Sisera, no doubt, had gone into battle with thought of the possibility of danger to himself, and had pictured how, if death came, it would be when he was selling his life at a great price while valiantly inspiring his own troops. But how different was the end, and how humiliating to such a soldier! He was not only defeated, but routed, and finally the only hope of escape left to him was in slipping out of his carriage and running away alone, a poor refugee from the enemy. And as he ran he saw in the distance the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, the representative of a tribe that was supposed to be neutral to the combatants in this war. Jael saw him coming and went out to meet him, and said to him, "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not." And as it seemed to be the only place of refuge, and with perhaps the most absolute confidence in the woman's hospitable intention toward him, he went into her tent and she covered him over with a mantle. Sisera, greatly exhausted, and with his lips swollen and his throat

parched with thirst, said as she turned to leave him, "Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." And the woman took a bottle of milk, one of those old goatskin bags of that day, no doubt, and gave him a refreshing drink and covered him up again. And Sisera said to her, "Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No."

And so Sisera, tired out, utterly defeated and broken down, gave way to the prostration of his physical strength and fell asleep in fancied security. Before long Jael, standing sentinel there at the door of the tent, knows by the regular, heavy breathing of the tired man that he has forgotten his troubles and fallen asleep. In the morning when Jael saw Sisera going out to battle, his army covering the hills and his troops swarming down through the valleys, with spear and helmet and buckler, she never dreamed that Sisera would come to destruction by her weak hand. But now all is changed, the great army has melted away, the war chariots are broken in pieces, the war horses have been drowned in the river, and Sisera, stripped of all the gaudy trappings of war, lies here, a poor, helpless, sleeping man, in her tent, at her mercy.

The moment she hears him breathing unconsciously she seems to have formed her purpose, if indeed she had not had that in her mind all the time, from the moment she recognized him flying toward her tent. Very quietly she takes a nail that was used in fastening down the corners of the tent, and the heavy mallet that was meant to drive it, and softly and stealthily as fate, that she may not disturb the sleeping warrior, she creeps in through the tent door, drops on one knee close to his head, and, placing the nail on the temple uppermost, with a quick savage blow of the hammer drives the sharp nail through his head and fastens him to the ground. There is a convulsive struggle, arms thrown wildly in the air, a moan, heavy breathing for a moment, and then the muscles cease to twitch, and bloody and still the warrior lies dead, pinned to the earth by a tent pin driven by a woman's hand.

Surely no soldier could ever have had a meaner end than that. But that is not too strong an illustration of the way sin deceives us into believing that at the worst it will bring us much pleasure and prosperity and honor. The glamour is all in our imagination and in the lying promises of the devil. The devil promised Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit she should become wise like a

god. There was a fascination about that. It might be dangerous, there might be peril in it, but the glamour of that promise enthralled her imagination. What about the reality? Banishment from the Garden of Eden, in shame and disgrace, to a life cursed by thorns and thistles, by pain and sorrow and tears. All the promises of happiness and peace to the sinner through sinful courses are as deceptive as that. The man who is sinning against God fondly dreams that he is going to be able to so plan, and to so execute his plans, that he shall always be able to escape the punishment of his sins; but the unexpected is always happening to the sinner. When Sisera was counting up the forces he had to meet in battle that day, he did not count on the thunderstorm and its fierce lightning that was to turn his war horses wild with panic. He did not count among his enemies Jael or her tribe; if he thought of her at all it was as a friend. But when a man wars against God he meets unexpected foes at every turn. How many passages of Scripture there are which bear out this truth! "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." Or hear that word that Christ uttered about the man with the great farm, whose crops were so bountiful that he had no place to store away his harvests. Yet in

that hour of abundance he had no thought of the poor who were starving, or of gratitude to God who had given him all these good things, and determined that he would build him larger barns and then comfort himself by saying, "Soul, take thine ease, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Christ declares that the stinging rebuke that fell like an arrow from the skies was, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." In the story of the girls, wise and foolish, which I read for our lesson, there were five that slept in indifference and carelessness, when suddenly the cry rang out, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." These messages tell us that we must always be at peace with God if we would be safe. The sinner has no reason for peace. In the very nature of things he is forever in danger. Hear the message to-night, and put yourself in friendship with the universe by confessing your sins against God and finding forgiveness of them in Jesus's name.

There is a most pathetic touch to this story of Sisera told in this same song of Deborah and Barak. Sisera's mother was waiting at home, expecting her son to be victorious, but watching eagerly, as a mother will. And when he did not come back as early as she expected, she began to

worry about it. The writer says, "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?"

Is a Christian mother or father saying that about you to-night? O, the loving, solicitous letters I get nearly every week from parents whose sons and daughters are in this city. Sisera's mother must have been heart-broken when she found he would never come again. Are you going to bring heart-break or comfort to those who love you? Give your heart to Christ to-night, and make glad the hearts that have prayed for you since your childhood.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE SHIBBOLETH OF FATE

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan.—*Judges* xii, 5, 6.

THE general who devised that scheme of finding out the truth about the stragglers who were captured was, whatever else may be said about him, a very shrewd man. It seemed to have been an almost infallible test. The whole tribe or nation had lost the power to pronounce the sound of what we call the letter "h." Little by little it had passed out of their speech, and though in general they spoke the same language as their neighbors, they spoke a language impoverished for the lack of this single sound; and this bright soldier in command of the Gileadites took advantage of this deformity of speech to prevent the escape of those who had



already escaped from the battlefield. It was a test which it was impossible for them to evade. Every man born and reared among the Ephraimites had been brought up with this defect of speech, and now it betrayed him into the hands of his enemies.

This word "Shibboleth" has gone into the language of the world. It has been given, for the most part, in our time a rather unpopular and contemptible meaning, as indicating the unreasonable demand of some faction who refuse to believe in the truth or righteousness of any except those who pronounce their particular "Shibboleth" of words as representing faith in matters of religion. There is, however, it seems to me, a very great and important message which is very naturally suggested by this interesting little story—that a man must pass in the end for what he is; that a man's character, the real bed-rock principles upon which his life is built, his inner self, must finally dictate his destiny. "The Shibboleth of fate" is that a man must stand or fall by himself, his own personality. As an Ephraimite could not suddenly, at will, change the language his mother taught him; could not, if he would, at command learn the new sounds which his tongue had never known how to speak—so in the great testing emergencies of life the man you are, the woman you are, will hold your fate

in its own hand. The inner self will speak out and decide where you belong.

I have been reading recently a very interesting paper, by Rev. John Hopkins Denison, which purports to give a highly scientific theory of the evolution by which the birds came to fly in the air. According to this theory, in the early days of the history of the earth, and long before man came, a queer creature poked its head out of the water at the edge of the ocean. He had an ugly snout, like a fish, only that at the end it was prolonged into a sort of horny bill with sharp little teeth set in it. His body was long and slimy and wriggly, like a fat eel, but he had two crooked, ungainly legs, with hooked claws, and at his shoulders were great flopping, awkward things that looked half like wings and half like fins. It would have been a puzzle to tell whether he was a fish or a bird. It is rather doubtful if he knew himself. He had been lying quietly enough down on the mud bottom, breathing in the cold water through his gills, when suddenly, as he had looked up with his glassy eyes toward the sunlight that was streaming in through the water, there had come over him a restless, unhappy feeling, a desire to get out of the mud and swim upward toward the light. And when his head was out of the water he found that he could draw the fresh,

warm air in a new way into what was certainly the beginning of a pair of lungs; and as he sunned himself in the warmth and light there came over him a strong feeling that he belonged in this higher world, and not down in the mud at the bottom of the sea. No bird wing had yet smitten the air, and there did not seem to be much chance for a bird in this ugly, awkward, slimy creature who was beginning to feel that he was meant to be a bird. He stood on the shore and flapped his awkward stumps of wings. The thrill of the bright air was in his lungs, the glow of a new life was pulsing in his veins. His blood was no longer the cold, lifeless fluid that flows through the gills of the fish. It was warm! It was the hot, red blood that carries life from the air in the lungs to every tingling bit of the body. He seemed to feel it ready to burst forth and clothe his slimy skin with a growth of feathery plumage. It was urging him on and up into the blue sky above. He must fly. Once more he flapped the ungainly wings, one spring with the crooked legs, and he was up in the air above the sea, above the earth. How glorious it was to behold the green hills and valleys below, the radiant sun and the pure atmosphere everywhere. And just then he flew over a quiet pool, and as he passed he saw the reflection of his form in the still water.

There he was, ugly, awkward, flapping his great stumpy wings, and wriggling along his slimy body with his crooked legs and huge claws sticking out in all directions. He was suddenly discouraged. What is he, ugly, awkward creature that he is, doing up there in the air and sunlight? His place is down in the mud. A few more spasmodic, tired flaps, and down he goes into the water with a great splash, and down into the ooze and slime of the ocean's bed.

But he could not stay in the water. Again he heard the call of the sunshine. Once more he crept forth into the air, and again the premonition of the bird life came back to him. He felt his lungs expand, he felt the hot blood flow, he felt again the passion for the sky. It was awkward work at first, and pitiful, to see the great ungainly thing trying to be a bird and fly. But he stayed in the air and slowly the change came. Long after, if any man had stood upon the earth, he would have seen a bird with great sweeping wings and glistening plumage soar upward from the low shore toward the sky. There is no awkwardness now, nothing ungainly in the movement. Stroke by stroke those great wings carry the glorious eagle resistlessly upward. He is at home now in the vast blue realm of the sky, bathed in the sunshine,

buoyed on the air, confidently soaring above the highest mountain peaks.

Now, I have retold to you this scientific supposition because it is, I think, a very suggestive illustration of the transformation which must come to a man or a woman who has been given over to a worldly life, living without reference to God and Christ and immortality, before there may be hope of entering into the joy and glory of a spiritual life in this or any world. This creature, born to be a bird, could no more help having hot blood in the air than he could keep himself from having cold blood in the water. By remaining in the air the gills of the fish little by little disappeared, and he became a bird. If he had remained in the water all the fishy characteristics would have developed. His possible wings would have become fins, the bird life would have lost its power to charm him, and he would have settled down into the mud forever. So with the higher possibilities of man. You yourself must decide the Shibboleth of fate. It is for you to say whether you will live the worldly life of the flesh or the high and holy life of the Spirit. There are many degrees of present morality, but the great choice must be made and that will settle destiny. It is a far cry from Kipling's Filipino, "Half-devil and half-child," to

Browning's tribute to his wife, whom he terms "Half-angel and half-bird;" but wherever you may be in the scale of moral quality, the final decision is in your hands, and you must utter that "Shibboleth of fate" which shall declare whether you are to sink down into the life of the appetites and passions and lusts, a mere worldly creature, or climb upward into the light and give yourself up to the sun-lit life of the Spirit.

There is no more horrible delusion of the devil than that discouraging and disheartening thing which he whispers to us, that the upper life, the life of purity and love, is impossible for us; that we have not in us the capacity to breathe that holy atmosphere, and have no powers of flight to buoy ourselves in the face of the Sun of Righteousness; that the lower ooze and slime of base tempers and evil passions is the atmosphere, and the only atmosphere, suited for such as we are. It is a devil's slander. We were born, the poorest of us, the weakest of us, the most awkward and ungainly of us in a moral way, to be the sons of God, and that sunlight of beauty and truth that has sought us out even in the muddy atmosphere where we have lain is not meant to mock us, but to beckon us upward and onward to the glorious life which is possible for us. And if we will give ourselves a

chance to breathe in God's Spirit every day, to have fellowship with the Christian graces, the warm blood of the heavenly love life will course through our veins, and our souls will rejoice to fly in the face of the sky.

The thing I want to impress on you most of all is that the Shibboleth of fate—your fate—is not in some other hands, not even the hand of God, but in your own. And we should never forget, in dealing with the most disheartened bit of humanity, that we are dealing with a kingly nature. He may be an uncrowned king, he may even be a dethroned king; but every individual is a monarch, nevertheless, over his own fate.

Robert Louis Stevenson, the novelist, was once walking with a friend when a tramp came up and begged alms. Stevenson said he would give him something if he might first give him a lecture, and thereupon he launched into a flow of oratory, brilliant, learned, humorous, and pathetic, making of the beggar before him a type of human failure, and pointing the way to rise above it; a lay sermon, in fact, broad in its charity, profound in its learning, rich in its intuition and wide philosophy. He finished rather abruptly and gave some money to the beggar, who touched his ragged cap and said: "Thank ye, sir, as much for what ye've said as for



what ye've given me; I'm not very often taken to be still a man."

It is the manhood in you, that spark of divine inheritance which clings to you, to which I make my appeal. I know there is in you that which answers to the appeal to turn from your sin to a noble and spiritual life.

Dr. Bonar tells us that, in the days when the Mosque of Omar was first built over that spot of Mount Moriah where the worshiper could touch a piece of the unhewn original rock of the hill, it was customary to bring loads of incense and aromatic shrubs into the shrine, which was called Sakhrah. As a consequence, if anyone had been worshipping there he carried away with him so much of the fragrance of the place that when people passed him in the market place of Jerusalem or in the streets they used to say to each other, "He has been in the Sakhrah to-day!" It is our glorious possibility to so live that we may come forth daily with our garments of conversation and conduct smelling of the holy communion and fellowship we have had with God. How strange and unnatural it is that we should have in us this dream of the best things, this longing for the holiest life, and yet go for years and years making no response to it!

Mr. Moody tells of a poor mother who had an

only child who was idiotic, and on the day when it was fourteen years of age a neighbor came in and found the mother weeping in the bitterness of her soul. She wanted to know what was the matter. The mother said: "For fourteen years I have cared for that child day and night; I have given up society and spent my time with her; and to-day she does not know me from you. If she would recognize me once it would pay me for all I have ever done for her." How many there are for whom Jesus died, and whom he has watched over and cared for and blessed, and to whom he has manifested infinite love and tenderness, who yet have never once recognized him, have never looked up into his face and said, "Thank you, dear Lord Jesus!"

## CHAPTER XXI

## THE MAN WITH A LOW AIM

Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts.—*Judges* xii, 13, 14.

THERE'S a biography for you with a vengeance! Seventy young men, whose father's and uncle's official position had to be recognized in a historical account, devoted themselves so assiduously and completely to the art and style of their riding of ass colts that, either by way of sarcasm, or from what other motive I know not, the writer of the book of Judges pauses in his historical narrative to mention the most notable event in the course of these young men's lives. The author is one who liked to tell a good story, who rejoiced in narrating deeds of heroism, and would have sung the glory of Judge Abdon's sons if there had been any glory to sing. But, alas! there was not. The only interesting thing about them was that there were so many of them that when they went out riding it took a herd of seventy ass colts to furnish them with a mount. Why these particular young fellows should

have been selected to bear the irony of history I do not know. They are certainly not the only ones who have slighted the great opportunities of life and given themselves up to the lowest and meanest aims. As I was meditating on this little incident it occurred to me that there is not a better text in all the Bible to illustrate the folly of courting failure to one's life through entering on it with a low aim.

In the days when these men lived there were great opportunities for achievement, as there have been and are in every age. There is always a Goliath for a David to slay. There is ever a roaring lion for a young Samson to tear in pieces. A Jonathan never fails to find a friend on whom to lavish his affection. There were plenty of wrongs for these men to right, abundant opportunity for heroic service that would have given them a glorious immortality. They had the vantage ground of being of the judge's family, which in those days, before the kings of Israel, was really the royal family. But these young princes of the realm, like many modern princes, were destitute of the princely spirit. To ride an ass colt in the style of the day, and to the admiration of the crowd, was the height of their ambition. The figure of a lone mule with an empty saddle would have been a proper

effigy on the tombstone of the descendants of Judge Abdon.

But I have not chosen this little story with the intention of devoting time to the heaping of contempt on these riders of ass colts in the days of the judges. It is the men like them to-day that I am interested in. It is their kith and kin, who live about us now, and who come to hear me preach, who arouse my interest and attention. The Bible holds its power through the ages because, more than any other book in the world, it is vital with life, human and divine. These life sketches, every one of them, have their message, full of suggestion, to the men of our day.

My message then, to-night, is that a low aim is the greatest folly, and will dictate certain failure. There is no hope for a man whose aim is so low that if he attains to it there will be no real glory in his life. The man who aims high may fail of reaching his fondest dreams, though it is an abiding faith with me that he need not fail if his dreams are noble enough to come true. But the man who aims low is doomed from the beginning, for the nearer he reaches his aim the worse he is off.

We have suggested here the folly of a person bending his chief energies toward any success which is purely frivolous and temporary, and

which can confer no lasting benefit. It could be of no special permanent honor to a son of the judge of Israel that he could make a finer display on an ass colt than any other man in the nation. It was a fad, a thing to laugh at for an hour, and that was the end of it. You may see the same folly in Absalom, the favorite son of David, who came to such a contemptible end. When Absalom was a young fellow he devoted himself to his hair; it was his highest ambition in his younger days to have the finest head of curls there was in the whole city, and he used to have his curls weighed every year, and the gossip of the town was often running on the weight of Absalom's curls. Absalom seems to have doted on his looks. He was determined not only to look pretty while he was alive, but after he was dead. And so while he was yet a young fellow he selected a picturesque spot and built him a tomb, and no doubt often pictured to himself what a gorgeous funeral there would be when he died. But the end of it all was that the very curls he had spent so much time on caught in the branches of a tree when he was escaping from the battlefield, and his stubborn mule ran out from under him and left him dangling there in the air waiting for Joab's spear, and his body was afterward flung into a trench and a heap of stones piled over it, as you

might bury a dog. No man whose story is spoken of in Old Testament history could have made his mark more brilliantly for the good of his race than Absalom. But his aim was low from the very beginning. It was frivolous and temporary, and he was never willing to deny himself his own way for to-day that there might be a better and more glorious to-morrow.

I see young men and young women every day who are making the same fatal blunder. You see young men making it financially. They get better salaries than their fathers did, who, by economy and industry and a determination to run their roots down in the land, denied themselves luxuries and saved their money, developing, in so doing, their business interests and ability until they became, and are to-day, the strong, reliable, well-to-do business men. But their sons and their nephews must begin where the old folks leave off. They spend as much for a suit of clothes as would have made the father respectable in his younger life for a year. They pamper their youth, that needs the discipline of self-denial in order to be its strongest, with luxuries, narcotics, and stimulants, because down at the bottom of things the chief aim of life, to them, is that they may look well in their clothes, and eat, drink, and be merry. Like the sons of Abdon, they



must make a great show when they mount their ass colts. Multitudes of men came to middle life and on to old age with no strength of business character, no influence in the business community, mere drift-logs of fate, because they have frittered and fooled away all their younger years on things that were purely temporary and could be of no value when attained.

Now, if you will carry all this up to the higher realm, our illustration does not lose its value. For there the man who is wise is the one whose high aim is to so use his money and his social privileges and all the lesser ends of life that they shall be building up a character which shall shine through an immortal career. For, after all, a man may succeed in a business way and yet attain to no higher wisdom. A man may have sense enough to deny himself the present luxury that he may have the comforts of wealth in old age, and yet fail of that nobler wisdom that stores treasures up in the bank of heaven. There is many another man like the rich fool whom Jesus tells about, who in his prosperity proposed to build still greater barns to hold his goods, and then mocked his soul by saying, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years." That man and all men like him are, like the sons of Abdon, only riders of ass colts that shall be soon

stripped of their trappings and left riderless, while the impoverished rider will hear the stinging judgment of God, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Wise men are always searching for something that will last. The manufacturers of paint in this country are just now searching the country for the man who painted a sign at a railway station in Harper's Ferry twenty-five years ago. The reason they want to find him is that he so wisely mixed his paint that, though a quarter of a century has passed by and the board has warped, the words he painted, "Harper's Ferry," stand out as clear and distinct as when the work was first done. There is no man on earth, who is known, who can do that to-day. And these manufacturers want to find the man who can mix paint so as to make it last. There is a fortune for him if he can be found. That is the great thread that runs through the universe; it is the difference between wisdom and folly always. Deny yourself an hour that you may have a day. Deny yourself the day that you may have a week. Deny yourself in youth that you may have a glorious manhood. Refuse present dissipation that you may have long strength and power. This was what Moses did when he refused to be

called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He had his eye on the greater reward, and, with the Hebrew's keen insight, refused to be cheated out of his long career of usefulness and honor for the temporary pleasures in Egypt.

You may see all this illustrated in the difference between Abraham and Lot. Lot had an eye on the present cattle market. Sodom might be wicked, but the cattle trade was good, and the pasture lands sloping that way were rich and well watered. He knew the danger to his own character and to his children, but he could not deny himself the present success; he must ride his ass colt toward Sodom. Abraham turned his face toward the desert in peace, without a cloud on his brow; why? "He beheld a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Lot lost his wealth and his home, and his family was disgraced and broken up. His failure from beginning to end was the failure of a low aim. Abraham was a success. His eyes were in the heavens. Wherever he went he built an altar unto God. Abraham had a longing for city life too, but he wanted a city that would endure. He would not put up with Sodom after he had caught a glimpse of the city in the skies.

Many of you who hear me ought to take this lesson home to your own hearts. The supreme aim of your life is too low and too frivolous. Nothing is high enough for you, nor for any man or woman, that does not take into its scope both worlds. To live a useful life here is to fit yourself for an honored life there. No life that is not useful and helpful, that does not serve the highest ends, will give you any permanent peace even in this world. And whatever success you have in this world, if it is not of a kind that works in with God's purpose, and brings you into communion and fellowship with him, it is but folly, and will bring you to contempt in the end.

A curious story comes from Madrid in explanation of the misfortunes which have afflicted the royal house of Spain. According to this superstition, the root of the mischief is a fatal ring of quite medieval deadliness. The late King Alphonso XII gave it to his cousin Mercedes when he was betrothed to her, and she wore it during the whole of her short married life. On her death the king presented it to his grandmother, the Queen Christina. She died very soon after, when it was passed along to the king's sister, who at once began to sicken and in a few days breathed her last. Alphonso then handed it to his sister-in-law, but in

three months she also died. His majesty now resolved to retain the fateful jewel in his own keeping, but he, too, soon fell a victim to its mysterious malignancy. By order of the widow it was suspended by a chain around the neck of the statue of the patron saint of Madrid. Alas! all intelligent people know what the fatal ring is that has led Spain from one disaster to another through all these years. It has been the fatal lack of a high aim. She has sought to amuse her people instead of educating them. She has sought the present pleasure rather than the permanent good. She has ridden her ass colt generation after generation, while other great nations have been developing their citizens in all the arts of life, and in all the strength of morality and religion. The nation is dying of a low aim. Young men, see that you do not die the same death. The present pleasure, the appealing lust, the lurking passion, all these are present and full of temptation; but it is only by denying yourself every hurtful and evil thing, only by fixing your eye upon the highest and holiest prize that God sets before you, and pressing onward toward it with untiring devotion, that you can make sure of glorious and eternal triumph. Emerson said, "If a man will but plant himself on his instincts, the great world will come round to

him." But Paul said it better when he cried, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

## CHAPTER XXII

## A KING IN HIDING

And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.—*1 Samuel x, 22.*

IT was the day for Saul's ordination as king, but he was timid about it, and, driven to a panic at last, he hid himself among the camp equipage, so that when the moment arrived to ordain a king the king could not be found. Then it was that the Lord made known unto them the whereabouts of the cowardly Saul. And they went and found the foolish fellow where he was hiding and brought him forth. It wouldn't have looked so absurd if he had been a little fellow, but he was a great, tall, splendid-looking man, head and shoulders higher than any other man in all the camp, and he must have looked and felt silly enough when they brought him out from his hiding place. He looked every inch a king when once he was brought forth and the crown was on his head, but he had hidden away among the pack saddles like some silly boy.

I have recalled this picture for our study this



evening because it suggests the great truth that we are constantly in danger of losing the most important things in life by hiding them among "the stuff;" concealing them among things that are of little importance compared to what is hidden. A young man comes to the city to make his life career. He has been reared in an honest, wholesome, Christian home; he has in his veins the honorable blood of a good man and a good woman who have feared God and eschewed evil. The traditions of his family, no matter how poor it may be, are all honorable, straightforward, and noble. The son comes into the great market place of the city and offers his young and vigorous manhood in the exchange in search of fortune. He thrusts himself into the thick of life, works hard, early and late, struggles, and succeeds. Ten, fifteen, twenty years go by, and people point to him and say: "What a success he has made! He came here with nothing and now he has a fortune." But I get closer to him and I begin to seek for the wholesome standard of honor which he brought to town with him years ago. I hunt for that genuineness and integrity with which he began his career; that keen sense of right and wrong which once held him to a frank and manly course, and I cannot find it. Instead I find that he has compromised with the tricks and intrigues

and shady methods which men use who make haste to be rich. He has hidden his manhood among "the stuff;" a young king came to town, but he has been hidden and lost among the camp equipage.

Another man gives himself up to pleasure. How to have a good time is the one query of every day. He becomes a mere plaything, a toy in social life. Anything that tickles his fancy, that gives him a new sensation, is his attraction. It may take a hundred ways of showing itself. He may be a flirt and develop into a silly butterfly given to soft dalliance with equally silly women. He may develop into a dude and become simply a clothes-horse on which to show the changing fashions of the tailor. He may become theater-struck and give himself over to the imaginary tragedies and farces of the stage. It may be that the pleasures of the appetite attract him, and he turns toward the path of the glutton and the winebibber. Back at the first he only meant to have a good time and had no evil or malicious purpose in it. But the serious purpose to do honest work for God and man, to be of some real value to the world in which he lives, to make the best and noblest man out of himself, in order that the world may be a nobler and better place because he has lived in it—all that he has hidden among "the stuff." There was a king in him;

but search for the king now, and you will find him hidden away and lost in the mere furbelows and husks of life.

What folly it is for men to hide the king in them among "the stuff!" For all these other things for which men hide their manhood are very transient and soon pass away. It is a remarkable fact that the most conspicuous examples of the men who have been preeminent in those characteristics that men count most to be desired have come to notably inglorious ends. Men struggle to attain strength, and are full of admiration for it; and yet Samson, the strong man who could rend a lion in his hands, who could slay three thousand of the enemies of his country with a bludgeon in his naked hand, hid his strength amid the mere "stuff" of folly and sin, and came to a miserable old age and a pitiful death. Absalom, who was famous as the most handsome man of his age, and whose beauty and brilliant qualities stole away the hearts of the people of a great city and nation, died the death of a dog. Ahithophel, the diplomat of Jerusalem in the brilliant days of King David, hid his honor amid "the stuff" of timeserving and policy, and hanged himself with his own hand. Alexander the Great made conquest of the earth, but died by poison at the end of a career which had mastered everything but

himself. He had made himself king of the world, but lost the inner kingdom of his own manhood. When men come to the end of life they find that everything is "stuff" except the quality of the manhood itself. Then, if a man has traded off or covered up manhood for money or power or pleasure, he realizes how he has been cheated. All the things that men struggle for that are outward are but "stuff" when the great emergencies of life come.

In the reign of King Henry VI there is mention made of Henry Beaufort, a rich and wretched cardinal, who, lying on his death-bed and perceiving his time to be but short, expostulated with himself thus: "Wherefore should I die, being thus rich? If the whole world were able to save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie, fie! will not death be hired? Will money and power do nothing?" But he found that they could not do anything. Such is the impartiality of death that unlimited money will do nothing: there is no protection against the arrest of death. In such an hour how like "stuff" seems everything that has interfered with the development of the kingly qualities of the soul.

There is a suggestion, I think, of great encouragement in the statement here that it was the Lord

who kept track of Saul, knew where he was hidden, and told them where to go and get him that they might bring him forth to his crowning. So, my brother, you that are hidden away among "the stuff," making a failure of the best things of life in the great kingly qualities of the soul, God has not forgotten you, he has not lost track of you, he has not lost his interest in you, he watches over you where you are hidden, and he inspires our hearts with courage and with sympathy to seek after you and bring you forth, if possible, to be crowned again as the son of God.

And we who are seeking to save men must never forget that, however repulsive and discouraging the pile of "stuff" that may be heaped upon a sinful soul, there is a king in hiding there, and if we can but arouse the nobler self into action we may save him.

Colonel Richard Hinton relates a very interesting little story of how he was walking once in Boston with Walt Whitman, the poet. It was at night, and as they passed along they saw a figure slouching toward them as if half afraid. The poet threw a massive arm out, as if startled, when he caught the fellow's face in the shadows. "Why, Jack," he cried, and drew him close with a kiss on the forehead. The man was evidently "a hard case."

His dress was disordered and his face haggard. Colonel Hinton instinctively drew away to a seat near by. Evidently in bitter trouble, the man almost clung to the stalwart arm that was about his shoulder. Some money passed and words were whispered. Then he noticed the man straighten his figure as Whitman again kissed his forehead, and he walked away quickly, saying firmly as he did so, "I will, Walt, I will!"

They passed on. They did not talk about him that night, but the next morning the poet briefly said at breakfast that "Jack" was a Long Island boy whom he had known in his youth. Jack had been reckless, and was fleeing from officers who were after him for stabbing a companion in a drunken brawl. The wounded man was recovering.

Years afterward Colonel Hinton was mustered out of the volunteer army and went to live in Washington. Whitman was one of the noted personalities there and they renewed their friendship. One day, in the Department of Justice, where Whitman was records clerk, Hinton was sitting by his desk, when the poet looked up suddenly and handed him a faded tintype of a private soldier, and said, "Do you think you have ever seen that face?" It was a shrewd, sharp visage, coarse but strong in outline,



and with something of a hunted look in the eyes. He shook his head and the poet remarked: "That's Jack. Boston Common, you know. He was killed at Peach Orchard—a good soldier, too." It is Christ's assurance that there is the making of a good soldier for the great battle of life in any poor sinful man if he be only willing to surrender at the cross and enlist in the army of the Lord. Christ knows how to find the king hidden under all "the stuff" of sin and bring him out to a new chance.

I fear that we often gather so much form and ceremony and outward show about our Christian churches and our Christian service that we lose sight of the great fact that the one thing for which all these things exist is to save lost men and women.

Thirty years ago a business man in Peoria, Ill., met a friend, William Reynolds, also a prominent business man in that city, and said to him, "Mr. Reynolds, how long have we known each other?"

"About fifteen years."

"Do you believe that it is necessary for me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ if I am to be saved?"

"Yes."

"Do you care whether or not I am saved?"

"Certainly."

"Pardon my frankness; I do not want to hurt



your feelings, but I do not believe that you care at all whether I am saved or lost."

"What do you mean?"

"You are a professing Christian, an officer in the church. We have met frequently during the last fifteen years. I have heard you speak on many topics. We have had many conversations. I would have listened gladly to you if you had spoken to me on the subject of religion, and yet in fifteen years you have never said one word about my salvation. You have never tried to win my soul to Christ. I cannot believe that you care whether I am saved or lost."

Mr. Reynolds with shame confessed that he had neglected his opportunities, and then said to his friend, "What has wrought this change in you?"

"I was in Chicago yesterday, and when I started to come home a young man asked if he might share my seat. As soon as the train began to move, the conversation, started by him, ran something like this: 'Pleasant day.' 'Yes.' 'Good crops this year.' 'Yes, pretty good.' 'We ought to be thankful to the Lord for sending good crops.' 'Yes, I suppose we should.' 'My friend, are you a Christian?' 'Well, I have a high regard for religion. I think churches are a good thing in a community.' 'Are you a Christian?' 'Well, I cannot say that I am, now that

you ask the direct question.' 'Do you think it wise for a thoughtful man to go on for years without giving thought to this subject?' 'No, honestly, I do not think it wise.' 'My friend, may I pray with you?' 'Why, if we are ever where there is a good opportunity, and you desire to do so, I do not think I would object.' 'There never will be a better opportunity than the present. Let us bow our heads here behind this car seat.' And with the train speeding through the suburbs of Chicago and across the prairie this man prayed for my salvation. I never saw a man so much in earnest. I know that he cared whether I was saved or lost. Just as he finished his prayer the brakeman called out the name of a station and my new-made friend was off. He had reached the door when it occurred to me that I did not even know who he was. I rushed after him and asked his name, and he replied, 'D. L. Moody.' I am going back to Chicago to find him and to have him show me the way of life."

Before Mr. Reynolds left his friend that morning he had led him to Christ, and then Mr. Reynolds said: "I am going to Chicago myself to find Mr. Moody. There is something wrong with my life."

A gentleman who had heard of this incident was

on the Pacific coast years after that, and meeting a man from Peoria, Ill., inquired of him, "Do you know William Reynolds of your city?" "I know him well." "What is his business?" "The people who know him best say that his business is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he packs pork to pay expenses." Mr. Reynolds himself had become a great soul saver, and he has given his life to pull into the light kings whom he has found hidden amid "the stuff" of sin and folly.

I am sure there are some who hear me at this time who are in just such a case as Saul. God has called you to a noble manhood, or a holy womanhood, but you have turned a deaf ear to the call, and have hidden yourself amid the trumpery of the world. I come as God's messenger to call you back to your high destiny. God has not forgotten you, Christ has died to redeem you, the Holy Spirit will comfort and inspire you, Christian friends will give you fellowship. Shake off the follies that have covered you and come forth with earnest purpose to fill the great and worthy place to which God has called you as his child.

## CHAPTER XXIII

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SELF-CONCEIT AND  
SELF-RESPECT

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him—*Proverbs* xxvi, 12.

Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.—*Nehemiah* vi, 11.

BETWEEN self-conceit and self-respect there is in reality a great gulf fixed; but the chasm is not always discerned, and the two are often confused in the mind and are sometimes taken the one for the other. Paul undertakes to distinguish between them in a careful way in the twelfth chapter of his letter to the Romans, where he says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." And from that Paul sets out to show that we have, every one of us, our own rightful place to work in the world, and our own important work; that there is no reason for our envying

anybody else, and no cause for anyone to think of our place or talents with contempt.

The fatal folly and sin of self-conceit lies in the fact that the conceited man expects to win on the principle of his own shrewdness or cunning or lucky star, instead of earning fairly and squarely his success by living a righteous life and giving an honest return in labor for the reward he expects. He thinks that somehow or other he is going to escape that great law of God which girdles the earth as completely as the law of gravitation, and which says, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But the self-conceited man thinks that it is possible for him to cheat God, and, though he sow wild oats, reap a useful crop into the garner of old age. He will admit that other men have tried to do the same thing and come out bankrupt and impoverished in every way, but his self-conceit causes him to believe that he will be able to do what others have always failed to do—to live a life of sin and yet in some way obtain the wages of righteousness. No wonder the wise man said of such an illogical and unreasonable creature, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

In the great cities, where young men gathered

from all the little towns and villages throughout the country congregate by the thousand, self-conceit works its awful ravage of destruction. Here is a young man who has just come to town from his village home with a curiosity to see the sights, and with a large idea of his own ability to take care of himself under all circumstances. And he is able to take care of himself until he begins to thrust himself into the ways of folly. The bird is able to take care of itself so long as it keeps out of the trap, and the writer of Proverbs says that it is in vain to set a trap in the open sight of a bird; but a self-conceited man will see the trap set, and know that it is a trap in which other men are constantly being caught and plucked of everything of value, and yet will walk straight on to his destruction. This young man has heard about gambling houses in the city; he has heard, of course, that they are dangerous places, where it is the rule and not the exception for men to come to disgrace and sorrow. But he thinks that these young men that have been caught were not so sharp as he is, and so, like the green goose that he is, he goes into the gambling saloon. He has been warned against it by his father and mother, and by wise friends, and yet so enormous is his self-conceit that he goes into the trap to pit himself against an old, trained gambler

who is a match for five hundred such young men as he is. Anybody that has been behind the scene knows that with all his experience, with all his craft, with all his secret arrangements, with all his organized knavery, it is impossible for anybody from the outside to make head against him. As Mr. Beecher once said, a man may have some chance in a game of chance, but in gambling saloons chances are not allowed. A man who gambles for a living is nothing but an incarnate thief, a cunning thief, a perpetual thief—first, last, and all the time a thief—and his business is to steal. He has made stealing a profession, and is practiced in it. He is acquainted with men's dispositions, and knows how to take them. And here comes in this green young man. He is exactly like a little fly exploring a great big black-bellied spider's web, that says, "It does not look as though there was very much to be afraid of here; I do not see anything that I cannot manage; at any rate, I will try," and pitches in. And after he is once in—you hear one faint buzz, and that is the end of him.

Here is another young fellow, with a little rotten spot of self-indulgence in him, who thinks that because he is away from home, where his mother will not know and his sisters are not likely to hear about



it, he can afford to glut his idle curiosity, or give vent to his evil passion in the dark places of the city that have held for him an unholy fascination. He has heard about other men being ruined there, but his overweening self-conceit bolsters him up, and makes him believe that he can go, and come out whole, where others have lost their manhood and their lives. And so he goes to the brothel, and is flattered and intoxicated by drugged wines and drugged pleasures, until the dart strikes through his liver. Poor fool, to think that he could handle pitch and not be defiled! When it is too late he wakes up to know that God's word is true when it says, "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil," and that the other part of the warning is also true, that the end of her career is bitter as wormwood, and that "her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell." If the self-conceited and deluded youth who is beginning to go in that dark way could only have wisdom to see "the ghastly skeletons, the pallid cheeks, the leaden eyes, the rotting bones, the consuming marrow, the hideous outcome of such a life! But ten thousand men perish because they deem themselves so smart; because they are confident that, however many may have perished, they are not going to perish." "Seest thou a man

wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

Here is another young man, brought up on the farm to drink cold water, and eat plain and simple food, and shun strong drink. He has heard of the sting of the adder, of the danger of drunkenness, and all that; but now that he is away from home influences he finds himself surrounded by people who sneer at those safe and quiet ways of life in which he has hitherto walked. And so he begins to reason that men have come to be drunkards because they were weak and had not much will power. The young man's self-conceit causes him to boast that he himself has an iron will and that he can always stop drinking when he wants to, and so he begins with the wine cup, and the taste grows until it becomes his master and ruins him body and soul. Other men look on and see him ruined and walk straight into the trap themselves, with their eyes open, because their bloated self-conceit flatters them that they are a little stronger than he was. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

Now, self-respect is a very different thing. Nehemiah, who uttered this second text, was a man who had genuine self-respect. Nehemiah had had a good place in the palace of the king of Persia

and was a great favorite of the king. If he had been a selfish man he would have settled himself down there and feathered his own nest, and given himself no trouble about the sad condition of his native city. But Nehemiah was an unselfish and noble soul. It was impossible for him to be happy while, though living in a palace, he knew that his relatives and friends were in trouble and that the walls of his native city had been torn down. And so he betook himself to prayer, and prayed most earnestly that God would in some way open the way for him to help in bringing prosperity again to his people. The next day, when he came into the presence of the king, the monarch at once detected the sorrow that was mirrored in the sensitive face of the young man. He saw that some trouble was gnawing at his heart, and required of him an explanation. The king became interested in his story, and sent him away to restore the walls of Jerusalem and build up again the prosperity of his people. Nehemiah returned to a discouraged and disappointed people, but his own faith in God was so strong, and his own magnetic personality so irresistible, that he soon put new heart into them, and had them all at work rebuilding the broken wall. So great was his success that the enemies of his people saw that the Hebrews would soon be inde-

pendent of them unless Nehemiah could in some way be frightened from his great work. At first they wanted him to come and have a council with them, but Nehemiah sent them word, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?" They tried four times to get him off with them into some sort of council where they would have a chance to fall upon him and kill him. But Nehemiah steadfastly went on with his work. Then they undertook to scare him. They told him that there was a lot of evil gossip going about, to the effect that he was planning treachery and rebellion, thinking in this way to frighten the brave young leader and dishearten him in his work. They did not frighten him, but they did succeed in alarming some of his friends, and one of them said to him, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee." "Should such a man as I flee?" shouted Nehemiah. "Who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." It turned out that this was a false friend, who had been hired by Nehemiah's enemies to entice him, if possible, to show cowardice by hiding in the temple.

Nehemiah's self-respect was not founded on any self-conceit or any overgrown idea of his own strength or greatness. It was built on the solid rock of his belief that God had called him to do a great work, and that because of that his life was dear to God, and it was his place to go on doing the work given him, leaving himself in the Lord's hands. That is the foundation of all true self-respect. No man can really respect himself unless he feels that he is doing right, that his life is justified in God's sight, and that he is doing the noble work which God would have him do. To make a man feel that he is fulfilling his mission is to dignify him with a noble and royal self-respect.

"Just where you stand in the conflict,  
 There is your place!  
 Just where you think you are useless  
 Hide not your face!  
 God placed you there for a purpose,  
 Whate'er it be;  
 Think he has chosen you for it;  
 Work loyally.

"Gird on your armor! Be faithful  
 At toil or rest,  
 Whiche'er it be, never doubting  
 God's way is best.  
 Out in the fight, or on picket,  
 Stand firm and true;  
 This is the work which your Master  
 Gives you to do,"

To give your heart to Christ and become a Christian cannot help but give you a more wholesome self-respect. The fact that Christ loves you, that he has chosen you for his friend, and that he daily holds communion with your heart, will make you feel differently about yourself.

A lady prominent in society in an eastern city wears a ring which has a very romantic history. It is an old-fashioned ring containing a lock of faded brown hair covered by a glass setting. Nearly forty years ago the white-haired lady who now wears the ring cut that tress of hair from her own curls and gave it to a jeweler to be inclosed in a ring which she gave to her soldier lover when he was setting out for the war. It can be imagined how he prized this memento of the girl he loved. Through many a weary month, in many a sad scene, it remained on the finger on which she had placed it. One day, after one of the fierce battles of the Wilderness, the young officer was carried, wounded, to the field hospital. He was insensible, but the surgeons saw that there was life in him and thought it might be preserved by amputating his arm. There was no time to be lost and they cut through the sleeve, and, having done their work, set the limb away with the sleeve and gauntlet still on it. A friend was beside his bed when the young

officer recovered his senses, and gently told him what had been done. His first thought was of his treasured ring; it was dearer to him than the lost hand. His friend went and found the arm, removed the gauntlet and saw the ring, which he took back to the sufferer. It was put on the only hand he had left, and his mind was relieved. This is the ring that his wife now wears. To her it is endeared by the affection in which her husband held it for her sake. Its intrinsic value is probably small, but as the symbol of a love which manifested itself in that trying hour it is precious beyond price. It is such a love that gives Christ a claim on his followers. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." No good woman could be loved like that by a noble man without an increased self-respect, without feeling dignified and ennobled by such love. So Christ ennobles and dignifies and glorifies us by the great love wherewith he loves us.



## CHAPTER XXIV

THE STORY OF A MAN WHO WAS CAUGHT IN HIS  
OWN TRAP

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.—*Esther* vii, 10.

HAMAN furnishes a very graphic illustration of the way sin, when yielded to, can take a man who is seemingly hedged about until he is impregnable to misfortune, and utterly destroy him. If Haman had been willing to let well enough alone, and live honestly and decently, he might have had a long and conspicuous career at the Persian court. He was a brilliant adventurer from the broken-down nation of the Amalekites and had captured the fancy of King Ahasuerus. The king was so greatly pleased with him that he honored him above all the other courtiers in his realm, and he came to be known as the power behind the throne in that kingdom. So great became his power and majesty that whenever he walked in the streets the proudest of the nobility bowed to him with as much reverence as if he were the king himself. Haman was a

proud man and a vain one, and nothing made him quite so happy as to have people bow to him in public. It thrilled him through and through with delight when some powerful noble did him princely honor before the eyes of the crowd.

But there was one man in town that didn't bow. He permitted the great Haman to go by without the slightest nodding of his stubborn head. This was Mordecai, a relative of Esther, the beautiful young queen. This stubbornness on the part of Mordecai was a source of the greatest chagrin and mortification to Haman. But Haman was proud, and thought Mordecai alone was scarcely big enough game for his gun. On learning that Mordecai was a Jew, he concluded that he would not only rid himself of Mordecai, but would exterminate the Jews from the country.

Haman was himself an exile because of the power of the Jewish people, and to get a chance to not only destroy Mordecai, but wreak vengeance on thousands of Jews throughout the empire, made his wicked little heart dance for joy. So the first time he had a good chance to talk with the king he told him that he had discovered a large number of people scattered throughout his empire who were disloyal to the government. They worshiped a strange God, and were especially disrespectful to King

Ahasuerus himself. These people were wealthy people, and he, Haman, loved the king so tenderly that it just broke his heart to see these people, who were traitors to the king, fattening on the good things of his realm. If the king would only give him a chance, nothing would make him happier than to clear the kingdom of this vile race.

Ahasuerus was a hot-headed sort of fellow, always going off half primed, and he fell into the trap very neatly. He took his signet ring off his finger and gave it to Haman, and told him to work his will with them; though, as for enriching the public treasury from the spoils of these Jews who were to be murdered, Haman might keep all that himself. Haman went home walking on air. He lost no time in sending out the edict all over the kingdom that, from the palace to the hovel, it should be no crime to kill a Jew on certain days. This brought even Queen Esther into danger of her life.

Mordecai lost no time in making the queen acquainted with this horrible plot of Haman's, and reverently assured her that it was no doubt providential that she had come to her high place for such a time as this, and that not only the fate of her race and her relatives, but her own life depended on her immediate action. Esther was put in a hard place.

King Ahasuerus was not the most gentle husband in the world; he had deposed one queen because she would not come to the dining room when he and his lords were drunk, and he had made a strict rule that anybody, even the queen, who should come into his presence without being invited, unless he graciously held out the scepter, was to be punished with death. The king had not seemed to care about sending for her for a long time, and he might not think of her again until it was too late; so she sent Mordecia word that, if he would call a prayer meeting among all their people on the outside, she would have a prayer meeting with her maids in the palace, and then on a certain day she would go to the king, whether she lived or died, and trust the result to God. There is romantic heroism in her words, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

Well, it turned out all right. As Esther came in timidly, his majesty, happening to be in a good humor, held out the scepter to her with gracious pleasure, and wanted to know her desires. Esther had the matter all arranged in her mind. She knew the king's weak spot. He was very fond of a good dinner, and greatly delighted in Haman's conversation and society; so she expressed her desire that the king and his friend Haman should

come that day to a banquet which she had prepared. This pleased the king, and he sent word to Haman to hurry up and come to the feast.

When the king was mellow with his wine after dinner, he again asked the queen what was at the bottom of all this. Man like, he couldn't get it out of his head that Esther wanted something out of the ordinary, to cause her to get him up such an unusually fine dinner. And the queen replied that if she had found favor in the sight of the king, she would like to have him come to a banquet again to-morrow, and let Haman come also, and then she would make known her request.

There was, no doubt, method in Esther's delay. She had found out that it was a good thing to pique the king's curiosity. By her making so much of it he would gradually get his mind made up to yield to a large request. The king gladly granted her petition, and Haman went out bubbling over with vanity and happiness. But as he went down the steps of the palace he saw something that ironed all the smiles out of his face. There was Mordecai, with a neck as stiff as if it had an iron ramrod in it, and he never bowed or paid the slightest reverence to him. Haman wanted to choke him, but he clinched his fists and went on in silence.

That was a notable night in Haman's house.

Everything seemed to be going his way. He sent out for all his friends to come in, and he had a great time boasting to them about how rich he was and what a nice lot of children he had, how smart his boys were and how beautiful his girls, and what great honor the king had bestowed upon him. And now, he says, Queen Esther has taken as great a fancy to me as the king, and I was the only man invited to her banquet to-day with the king, and as a special mark of favor I am to be at a banquet again to-morrow with the king alone. And then Haman made a wry face: "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Poor Haman, he was one bow short, and that one old stiff-necked Jew was the fly in the ointment which robbed him of all his pleasure. But his wife and his friends advised him not to worry about Mordecai. "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high," they said, "and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon." That pleased Haman, and he ordered the gallows built.

Just here an interesting thing happened in the palace. Ahasuerus was troubled with insomnia, and that very night he could not sleep. He had hit upon the ingenious plan of having himself read to sleep, and he found that nothing would work so

well as having his own writings read to him. I never tried it, but I have heard of preachers having their own sermons read to them on such occasions with great profit. Well, this night the king had one of his servants reading to him out of his diary. And, reading along, they came to the place which told how Mordecai had once discovered a plot against the king's life and by loyally making it known had saved him. The king immediately inquired, "Has any honor ever been paid to Mordecai for that kindness?" And he found that nothing had been done. He felt very much ashamed about it, and had it still on his mind when the courtiers began to gather in the outer room the next morning. He turned to his steward and said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman was there, an early comer, in order to ask the privilege of hanging Mordecai. But the moment he was admitted, before he got a chance to speak, the king turned and said, "Haman, is that you? I am glad to see you; I was just wanting your advice about a case. What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?"

Haman very naturally supposed that he was the man that was to receive this honor, so he fixed the thing up in great shape, with this idea as the basis of his proceedings. He advised that the royal



apparel be brought, and the king's horse, and the crown royal for his head; and counseled that the man be appareled by the noblest princes of the realm as his servants, and that one of these princes lead the horse through the streets with this favored man on its back, and let it be shouted everywhere, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

"All right," said the king; "that will do. Haman, you go and treat Mordecai that way." Can you imagine a bitterer thing than that? If there was ever poetic justice done on earth it was done then. There are some historic scenes that I should like to have witnessed, and one of them would be the dressing of Mordecai by Haman. But all things pass, and the bitter hour was over, and Haman went home crestfallen and broken-hearted to tell his wife and his friends the horrible shame that had fallen on him. His wife and friends were evidently very much alarmed themselves, and were very poor comforters, for they prophesied that this was probably the beginning of the end. But while they were talking, one of the king's chamberlains came to hurry him away to the banquet. Poor Haman went, with a heart like lead, because he had to. It was not appetite that dragged him thither.

As the second banquet drew near its close the

king again inquired of Esther her petition, and then she told him that her relatives and friends, as well as her own life, had been plotted against, and were in immediate danger. The king, aroused and angry, said, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" Then I can imagine Esther leaping to her feet from the banquet, and pointing the accusing finger at the shrinking, trembling scoundrel shaking like a man with the palsy at the table, as she shouts, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." One of the servants threw a cloth over Haman's head, hiding his face from the king's anger, and Harbonah, the chamberlain who had been at Haman's house to hurry him to the banquet, and who had seen the peculiar preparations that had been made there, said, "Haman has a gallows fifty cubits high, which he made for Mordecai, the king's friend, standing in his house." Then said the king, "Hang him thereon." And so the gallows which Haman had built for Mordecai was all ready for himself.

The sermon has preached itself as the story has gone on, and there remains little for me to say. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The man who goes through the world full of hatred and vengeance, building a gallows for the man he hates, is only preparing for his own disaster.

“With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again.” The man who is full of forgiveness and kindness and love toward his fellow-men sows the seeds of all that is gracious and beautiful, that shall make fragrance to bless the path of his declining years. He who goes through the world with bitterness and meanness is sowing dragons’ teeth that will be a hard pillow to lie on when he is old. Wickedness may succeed for a while, but every iniquitous plot has within it the elements of its own disintegration. Righteousness that will not bow its head to a sin because it is successful or popular may be threatened and plotted against, and for a time clouded with defeat, but in the end its enemies hang on the gallows they have built for it.

## CHAPTER XXV

## THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him.—*Daniel* v, 6.

Then was Daniel brought in before the king.—*Daniel* v, 13.

THE theme we are to study is one that has been used by artist and poet and orator for hundreds of years. It is one of those strong and splendid pictures so replete with instruction, of such universal application, that its teaching is as valuable in one age as in another and finds something that echoes back a response in every human breast.

I have brought these two Scriptures together in this contrast in order to suggest the striking difference that exists between a man who depends for his power on his own inherent personality and a man who is dependent entirely upon the position which he holds or the circumstances which surround him. A few hours before this scene is opened, Belshazzar would have seemed to be by far the most splendid and important personage in all Babylon; he was king over a rich and powerful

nation, which had in Babylon the most magnificent capital in the world. Compared to him, Daniel was small indeed. But a few hours pass by, and a great emergency arrives which calls not for position or office, but for manhood; and in that hour Belshazzar shrinks and shrivels, and Daniel looms up large. So it will ever be on the great occasions of life. Office, wealth, fame—these are only the scabbards; manhood is the sword, which is infinitely more important.

A good deal of comment has been made concerning the sword presented recently to Commodore Schley by the people of Philadelphia. The sword cost several thousand dollars, and by far the greater part of this money was spent on the jewels and decorations on the scabbard. This fact has revived a story told of General Winfield Scott many years ago, who had received a beautiful sword from the State of Louisiana and was asked how it pleased him.

"It is a very fine sword, indeed," he said, "but there is one thing about it I should have preferred different. The inscription should be on the blade, not on the scabbard. The scabbard may be taken from us; the sword never."

An eastern editor, reflecting on this incident, brings out very pertinently the great fact that the

world spends too much time, money, and energy on the scabbard of life; too little on the sword. The scabbard represents outside show, vanity, and display; the sword, intrinsic worth. The scabbard is ever the semblance; the sword is the reality. The scabbard is the temporal; the sword is the eternal. The scabbard is the body; the sword is the soul. The scabbard represents the material side of life; the sword represents the true, the spiritual, the ideal.

Now, Belshazzar had a very much more brilliant scabbard than Daniel, but when it came to the sword of real manhood the young man from Jewry outclassed him entirely. Belshazzar had the title of king, but Daniel was far more like a king as they stood there facing each other in that time of peril and alarm.

Let us keep our story and our sermon together as we go along. We have here the story of that evolution which goes on, in a sinful life, just as surely in a bookkeeper or a trolley car conductor or a drug clerk as it does in a king. The first step in most downward careers is the step of dissipation or wastefulness of the forces of life. If you will think over most of the men and women you have known who have come to moral disaster, you will find that this is correct. Not always the same

kind of dissipation, but a failure to hold one's self keenly responsible to God for the careful and noble use of the talents committed to us. The story we have in hand is like that. Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, went the way of dissipation. We have not seen all the steps that come up to this climax. We see him after he is ripe in wickedness. He has gone the path of the drunkard. He talked the language of those modern silly fools who say, "A short life and a merry one, for we will be a long time dead." Dissipation has bred in him, as it does in men and women everywhere, irreverence and recklessness. Ten years before Belshazzar never would have dreamed of the blasphemy and reckless conduct of this hour which is portrayed to us. But sin must, in the very nature of things, grow more reckless and wicked as the time goes on. So there came a day when Belshazzar determined to make a feast such as Babylon never saw; one that should be talked of for many years to come. Alas! he little dreamed how long it would be talked of and what an immortality of ignominy it would give him. And so, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had



taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

It was a brilliant scene of revelry and drunkenness. All hearts were full of gayety; fears were thrust aside; reason and conscience were crushed under foot; and yet judgment waited on that wicked throng. Belshazzar might be rich and powerful, but he could not measure arms with God. In the midst of the revelry, "in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

Often it is true that the most reckless man in sin is the greatest coward when his sin overtakes him in judgment. What a pitiful spectacle Belshazzar is as he stands there staring at the ominous

sentence on the wall, with his knees smiting together, his hands trembling, and his teeth chattering, like a man with the ague. Where is all his bravado now? Where is all his blasphemous recklessness? It is gone like froth, and the bitter dregs at the bottom of the cup remain to be swallowed to the very last. Pride and recklessness are poor foundations to build on; they will not stand when the storm comes. When the rain of affliction and death beats upon such a house it falls, because it is built upon the sand. Kings may come and go in Babylon, but Daniel abides, for his character is built upon the solid rock. How is it with you? Can you stand the storm, or not? Only the reverent soul, living in humble fellowship with God, can have composure in the day of reckoning.

There is something suggestive in the fact that it was not in the first hour of his fright that Belshazzar was wise enough to turn to Daniel. No; the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers—every humbug of a fortune-teller in Babylon—all had their turn before he was wise enough to go to the man of God. Finally the queen sent to him and reminded him of the presence of Daniel in the city. She said, "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and

wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him." So Daniel was called, and it was found that the wisdom which cometh from God still abode in that noble man.

How many men overtaken by their sin, in our own day, turn everywhere for relief before they turn to Christ and the house of God. A man tries to drown his grief in drink, or forget his sorrow in cards, or lose his restlessness in speculation—only to sink himself the deeper in his misery—before he turns with humble heart to confess his sin and find forgiveness at the mercy-seat.

It is a very sad note which I am compelled to strike in conclusion: that one may go too far on the path of sin, and call when it is too late. The day of probation had passed for Belshazzar; judgment had overtaken him. The handwriting on the wall was not a warning; it was a sentence. The warning had been coming again and again, but he would not heed it. Daniel said to him: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But

when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. . . . God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. . . . Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. . . . Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." And that night Belshazzar was slain.

I bring this solemn message to you to-night, glad in my heart to know that you who hear me are still in the day of probation and warning; that if you will you may hearken unto God, and by turning from your sins to Christ may find forgiveness and eternal life. Hear his message to-night, and be saved!

## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE VALLEY OF DECISION

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.—*Joel* iii, 14.

I do not care to enter into a discussion of the prophecy of this book, or to inquire into the relation of the text to its setting. It is the simple statement of fact that there are multitudes of people who are in the place where they must decide one way or the other, and where the judgment of God will follow fast upon their decision, to which I wish to call your attention.

There is nothing so important as a decision. To choose while one has the power to choose, rather than to drift with the current until the power of choice is taken away, is one of the important characteristics of a strong and noble manhood or womanhood. Things are so arranged that when we will not decide for ourselves a decision is made for us, and it is ever against us. A boy passing through the years of his youth has the power to choose, oftentimes, whether he will have a good

education or not. But if he delays, and does not decide, the years soon tell the tale and the power to choose is taken from him; the time has passed by when school days are possible for him. We are assured that life is like that in other things. We have the opportunity now to choose Jesus Christ as our Saviour, to choose the Christian character as our own, to choose the Christian life as our career; but life is steadily passing on, and if we do not choose Christ it will not be long before the opportunity will have passed by forever, and our decision will be registered against him.

To-night I offer you Jesus Christ as your Saviour. You have the power, by God's grace, to accept him to-night and to begin this very hour to lead a Christian life. If you do not accept him definitely, and obey him by an open confession, then you reject him. There cannot be any neutrality in this matter, for Christ asks for your open friendship. He declares that the man that is not with him is against him. If you accept him to-night you enlist under his banner. The white flag of the cross becomes your flag. The white life of Christ becomes your life. You have put yourself with his friends and you have the promise of his friendship and guidance. Will you decide for him to-night? God says to us, in his word, "I have set



before you life and death ;” he entreats us in every conceivable way to choose life, and you will choose one or the other by your own action. You say, “I do not choose.” But your very conduct is a rejection of Jesus unless you accept him. As Dr. Cuyler says, people do not usually set success and happiness on the one hand, and ruin on the other hand, and then willfully choose to be ruined. No man voluntarily chooses the disease, disgrace, and horrors of drunkenness. Yet thousands do choose to tamper with the seductive, intoxicating glass, and their own free choice brings them to the drunkard’s self-damnation. In like manner, when you decide to refuse the loving Saviour who is knocking at the door of your heart, you choose to risk the consequences. When you choose to continue on in sin, to follow the devices and desires of an unconverted heart, and to refuse to be all that Christ would make you, you are deliberately choosing the path that separates you from Christ and heaven.

No man can serve two masters. You cannot go toward Chicago and toward Buffalo from Cleveland at the same time. Every day you spend away from Christ you are getting farther from the Christian life, and the harder it will be for you to become a strong and happy Christian.

It is not more meditation, more thinking, more

theorizing, that you need ; it is more decision. Dr. Newman Hall, the great English preacher, relates in his autobiography two very interesting incidents showing how people came to a decision at unexpected times and were saved. One was when he undertook to climb Mount Snowdon. He slept on a plank in a wretched little hut on the mountain-top. A large number of workingmen, quarrymen, were also waiting to see the sun rise in the morning. It was the most beautiful sunrise he ever saw. No words could describe the reddening sky, the first level rays goldening a hundred peaks, the shadow of the mountain they were on creeping over the lakes and valleys below. There were about one hundred Welshmen and a dozen Englishmen on the mountain with him. They asked him to speak to them—some one recognizing who he was—but he replied that God was preaching to them and they had better hear his voice. But he offered prayer, and when he closed he noticed that several men were shedding tears. A year afterward he was taking a walking trip through that same country when a man pulled up the cart he was driving, containing cheeses and a live pig, and asked if he might give him a lift. Dr. Hall felt that it was a good opportunity for conversation. The countryman had recognized him, and, speaking of that

sunrise, said it resulted in the conversion of fifty people. Dr. Hall said that he had only offered prayer. But the man replied that some had decided for Christ that morning, though they had not understood a word he said, they being Welsh, but the effect of their conversion was a revival in the village churches near.

The other story is of a very different circumstance. One Sunday evening, in his own church, Dr. Hall was delivering a written sermon on temptation, and suddenly felt that his address was unlike his usual style, and too argumentative for many of the people. He suddenly paused, looked away from his manuscript, and, appealing with a loud voice to the more distant of his audience, said: "Perhaps among those pressing in at the door there may be some one so miserable as to think of throwing himself over yonder bridge, saying, perhaps, 'It's too late to tell me not to enter into temptation. I have done it; I am in it. There's no hope for me.' Stop! Stop! There is hope. Christ died for thee. He will pardon, he will save, even thee!" A few weeks afterward one of the members of his church told him that he had called to see a woman who had made up her mind to throw herself over Blackfriars Bridge, one Sunday evening, but she thought it was too light and a policeman might

stop her; so in order to wait for the darkness she went into the church and stood in the crowd inside the door. Standing there it seemed to her that Dr. Hall had called directly to her to stop, and come to Christ, and she went back to her home to pray, and became a true and happy Christian.

What saved these people was that, though the call of salvation came unexpectedly and in an unusual way, they at once decided and accepted Christ as their Saviour. In their immediate decision was their salvation. I wish I knew what I might say to win everyone here to-night to the safe refuge under the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ.

A young traveler, who was making a pedestrian tour through the Alps, tells a beautiful story of Swiss honesty. The Swiss friend who was with the foreign sightseers, observing that they were weary after a six hours' march from the Monastery of St. Bernard, said, "We shall soon reach my brother's house, and you shall all have a cup of hot coffee and some food." But when they reached the farmhouse it was closed—doors locked, shutters shut—and the whole place deserted, for it was the time of vintage and everyone was in the vineyard. Our young traveler was much disappointed, but the good Swiss friend said, "You will get your

refreshment just the same." And reaching up toward a cross made of gay mountain flowers which hung on the door, according to the pretty Valais custom, he pulled down a great doorkey, and in another minute the door was open. A blazing fire of logs was quickly kindled, and in a short time they were refreshed with food and drink. All this seemed so strange to the tourists that they made inquiry as to how people would dare go away and leave the key in such a convenient place. "O," said the Swiss, in quite a shocked tone, "there's no fear of any of our people entering a house which does not belong to them. If the key is put under the cross it is always safe there."

But the key under the cross on a Swiss door is not so safe as your soul will be, both in time and in eternity, if you put it under the shadow of Christ's cross, by choosing him this day as your Saviour and Lord. No one can pluck us out of that refuge.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE VILLAIN IN THE FIRST CHRISTMAS DRAMA

Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.—  
*Matthew ii, 13.*

HEROD is preeminently the villain in the plot of the first Christmas story which has fascinated the heart of mankind for so many hundreds of years. All the others that appear in the story are most attractive characters. The wise men who come from across the desert following the star in the East, bringing their rich gifts and ready to worship the Christ, are altogether winning and splendid in their suggestion of nobility and largeness of character and life. The shepherds out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, who, when they have heard the good news, come into the little town of Bethlehem full of curiosity and reverent awe, and who go back again to their flocks to praise God, win our hearts by their honesty and simplicity. The angels who bore the good tidings of peace and good will, and all that mighty company of the heavenly host which sang their

praises to God and their anthems to the newborn Christ, have made all human life richer and sweeter ever since by the glimpse they gave into the beauty and glory of the inhabitants of the upper skies. They have filled the background of all our lives with singing angels, and put a prophecy of peace and brotherhood on human lips wherever the story of the Christ has gone. The little manger itself and the stable and the cattle have captured the fancy of the world. And pure-minded, honest Joseph, and sweet-faced, glory-crowned Mary, with the holy glow of motherhood resting on her innocent face as she kisses the newborn child—all these are attractive. There is only one villain in the plot, and that is Herod.

Herod desired to slay Jesus because he feared the overthrow of his government. He had no idea of a spiritual kingdom, and there was no basework in the man for such a belief. He was a brutal, sensual, wicked man, to whom only brute force appealed, and he supposed that this new Messiah, prophesied about, and whom the wise men of the East had come so far to seek, was the birth of a new kingdom which was to be a threat against his temporal power. The Herods, all of them, knew the truth of the proverb, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." This Herod, like the rest,



was all the time looking for danger, and so he was determined to crush it out while the promised king was only a child. When the wise men were led of God to return to their home without seeing Herod, he determined to make sure of his wicked purpose by killing every child under two years old in the entire region. This cruel edict was carried out, and the land was filled with broken-hearted fathers and mothers, and with the graves of little children. But the child he sought escaped his malice.

I have not selected this picture for our study with the intention of taking the time for a discussion of the sins of Herod, who has long since gone to his judgment; but to try to bring clearly before your mind the fact that Satan and sin are ever trying to destroy the Christ in our time as persistently and wickedly as in the days of Herod. All that is wicked in the world is warring against Jesus, and is seeking to take him out of the heart and lives of men. You who are Christians could bear testimony to the truth of this. You know that to maintain a Christian life and to keep a happy communion with Jesus in your soul require that you shall war against the world and the flesh and the devil.

And you who have never become Christians, but who were reared in Christian homes and were

brought up to look forward to Christmas as a time of love and good will, will bear witness as to how persistently the evil spirit has wrought in his attempt to destroy entirely that old spirit of love and reverence toward Christ and his Church which you knew something about in your childhood. It may be that I speak to some out of whom the Christ-thought and the Christ-life have almost entirely disappeared. The memory of the prayers that were taught you in boyhood or girlhood is like a shadowy dream that has no longer any power to influence your daily conduct. Even the habit of churchgoing has ceased to be anything more than an empty form. Its true function in bringing you into relation to Christ, which had something real and genuine in blessing in your youth, has now vanished. Your indifference or your sinfulness has driven Christ out of your life. Other things have come in and filled your thought and affection until, like the little inn in Bethlehem on the first Christmas eve, there is no room for Christ in your soul. If this is so, you have met with the most terrible loss that can come to any human life.

Henry Van Dyke, who has given us a number of supremely beautiful Christmas stories, has given one of rare interest this year, in which he tells the story of the "Lost Word." It is the story of a

young man who lived in Antioch some fifteen hundred years ago. This young man was the son of Demetrius, a very proud and wealthy old pagan. The son, however, came under the influence of the great Christian preacher, John of Antioch, and though it cost him his father's home and all the prospects of wealth and power as his father's son, he accepted Christ and for two years lived with the Christians. But he fell, at last, into a gloomy mood, and lost the sweetness and joy out of his Christian faith. While he was in this depressed and unhappy condition Christmas morning came, and having no joy with the Christians in their festivities, Hermas wandered away by himself to the Grove of Daphne, in which there was a heathen temple. He sat down beside a gushing spring and gave himself up to gloom and sadness. While he sat there, feeling that his Christian life was a failure, an old pagan priest came upon him, and tempted him to renounce Christ. Although he refused to do that, he opened his heart to the old priest and admitted his longing for worldly pleasure.

"Well," said the old man soothingly, as he plucked a leaf from the laurel tree above them, and dipped it in the spring, "let us dismiss the riddles of belief. I like them as little as you do. You

know this is a Castalian fountain. The Emperor Hadrian once read his fortune here from a leaf dipped in the water. Let us see what this leaf tells us. It is already turning yellow. How do you read that?"

"Wealth," said Hermas, laughing as he looked at his mean garment.

"And here is a bud on the stem that seems to be swelling. What is that?"

"Pleasure," answered Hermas bitterly.

"And here is a tracing of wreaths upon the surface. What do you make of that?"

"What you will," said Hermas, not even looking. "Suppose we say success and fame."

"Yes," said the tempting priest; "it is all written here. I promise that you shall enjoy it all. This is the season that you Christians call the Christmas, and you have taken up the pagan custom of exchanging gifts. Well, if I give to you, you must give to me. It is a small thing, and really the thing you can best afford to part with: a single word—the name of Him you profess to worship. Let me take that word and all that belongs to it entirely out of your life, so that you shall never need to hear or speak it again. You will be richer without it. I promise you everything, and this is all I ask in return. Do you consent?"

"Yes, I consent," said Hermas, mocking. "If you can take your price, a word, you can keep your promise, a dream."

The old priest laid the long, cool, wet leaf softly across the young man's eyes, and an icicle of pain darted through them; every nerve in his body was drawn together there in a knot of agony. Then all the tangle of pain seemed to be lifted out of him, and he fell into a deep sleep.

When Hermas awoke he had gone back again to his worldly life. He left the grove and walked toward his father's house. As he drew near he saw a confusion of servants in the porch, and the old steward ran down to meet him at the gate, saying, "The master is at point of death, and has sent for you."

Hermas hurried to his father's side and found him dying. The feeble old man said, "It is good that you have come back to me. I have missed you. I was wrong to send you away. You shall never leave me again. You are my son, my heir. I have changed everything. Hermas, my son, come nearer—close beside me. Take my hand, my son!"

The young man obeyed and, kneeling by the couch, gathered his father's cold, twitching fingers in his firm, warm grasp.

"Hermas, life is passing—the last sands, I can-

not stay them. My soul is empty—nothing beyond—very dark. I am afraid. But you know something better. You found something that made you willing to give up your life for it—it must have been almost like dying—yet you were happy. What was it you found? See, I am giving you everything. I have forgiven you. Now forgive me. Tell me, what is it? Your secret, your faith—give it to me before I go.”

At the sound of this broken pleading a strange passion of pity and love took the young man by the throat. His voice shook a little as he answered eagerly:

“Father, there is nothing to forgive. I am your son. I will gladly tell you all that I know. I will give you the secret of faith. Father, you must believe with all your heart and soul and strength in——”

Where was the word? The word that he had been used to utter night and morning, the word that meant to him more than anything he had ever known—what had become of it?

He groped for it in the dark room of his mind. He had thought he could lay his hand upon it in a moment, but it was gone. Some one had taken it away. Everything else was most clear to him: the terror of death; the lonely soul appealing from his

father's eyes; the instant need of comfort and help. But at the one point where he looked for help he could find nothing; only an empty space. The word of hope had vanished. He felt for it blindly and in desperate haste.

"Father, wait! I have forgotten something—it has slipped away from me. I shall find it in a moment. There is hope—I will tell you presently—O, wait!"

The bony hand gripped his like a vise; the glazed eyes opened wider. "Tell me," whispered the old man; "tell me quickly, for I must go."

The voice sank into a dull rattle. The fingers closed once more, and relaxed. The light behind the eyes went out. Hermas was kneeling, full of agony, beside the dead.

One would have thought this would have sent him back again to the Christians and the holy faith, but he had bargained away the name of God and Christ for worldliness and pleasure, and so he went forward. He was now very wealthy and powerful. He married a beautiful woman, Athenais. A son was born to them who was the idol of their hearts. Yet all their wealth and power did not give them peace; they longed for something, they knew not what. To try and find peace Hermas thrust himself into the world's excitement and glory. He



built palaces, he patronized art, he gave banquets to kings, he sent grain ships across the seas; but peace did not come. One day he entered the great chariot races at Antioch, and his black Numidian horses won the victory over a score of rivals. Hermas received the prize carelessly from the judge's hands, and turned to drive once more around the circus, to show himself to the people. He lifted his eager son into the chariot beside him to share his triumph.

Here, indeed, was the glory of his life—this matchless son. As the horses pranced around the ring, a great shout of applause filled the amphitheater and thousands of spectators waved their salutations of praise: "Hail, fortunate Hermas, master of success! Hail, little Hermas, prince of good luck!"

The great acclamation and the fluttering of garments in the air startled the horses. They plunged violently forward, a rein broke, a wheel of the chariot caught against a stone parapet, and the boy was tossed into the air, his head striking the wall. When Hermas turned to look for him he was lying like a broken flower on the sand.

Some of you know the agony of the days that followed; know, as I do, by personal experience, what it means to have a son, who holds all your

heart, trembling in the darkness between life and death. Hermas tried to pray, but he could not, for the name he used to pray to was lost. His wife begged him to pray, but he could only say, "Long ago I knew something. It would have helped us. But I have forgotten it. It is all gone. But I would give all that I have if I could bring it back again now at this hour, in this time of our bitter trouble."

A servant entered the room and told him that John of Antioch was waiting to see him, and also Marcion, the old pagan priest. Hermas and his wife, broken-hearted, went together to meet them. The good Christian looked the young man tenderly in the face and said, "My son, I have come to you because I have heard that you are in trouble."

"It is true," answered Hermas passionately. "We are in trouble; desperate trouble, trouble accursed. Our child is dying. We are poor, we are destitute, we are afflicted. In all this house, in all the world, there is no one that can help us. I knew something long ago, when I was with you—a word, a name—in which we might have found hope. But I have lost it. I gave it to this man. He has taken it away from me forever."

He pointed to Marcion, the old pagan priest. The old man's lips curled scornfully. "A word!

a name!" he sneered. "I promised him wealth and pleasure and fame. What did he give in return? An empty name."

"Servant of demons, be still!" The voice of John of Antioch rang clear, like a trumpet, through the hall. "There is a name which none can lose without being lost. There is a name at which the devils tremble. Depart quickly, before I speak it!"

Marcion had shrunk into the shadow of one of the pillars. A bright lamp near him tottered on its pedestal and fell with a crash. In the confusion he vanished like a shadow.

John turned to Hermas, and his tone softened as he said, "My son, you have sinned deeper than you know. The word with which you parted so lightly is the key-word of all life and joy and peace. Without it the world has no meaning, existence no rest, and death no refuge. It is the word that purifies love, and comforts grief, and keeps hope alive forever. It is the most precious thing that ever ear has heard, or mind has known, or heart has conceived. It is the name of Him who has given us life and breath and all things richly to enjoy; the name of Him who, though we may forget Him, never forgets us; the name of Him who pities us as you pity your suffering child; the name of Him who, though we wander far from Him, seeks us in

the wilderness, and sent His Son, even as His Son has sent me this night to breathe again that forgotten name in the heart that is perishing without it. Listen, my son, listen with all your soul to the blessed name of God our Father."

The cold agony in the breast of Hermas melted away. A sense of sweet release spread through him from head to foot. The lost was found. The dew of a divine peace fell on his parched soul, and the withering flower of human love lifted its head again. The light of a new hope shone on his face. He lifted his hands above his head and words of prayer were on his lips: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord! O my God, be merciful to me, for my soul trusteth in thee. My God, thou hast given; take not thy gift away from me, O my God! Spare the life of this my child, O thou God, my Father, my Father!"

A deep hush followed the prayer. "Listen!" whispered his wife breathlessly.

Was it an echo? It could not be, for it came again! The voice of the child, clear and low, waking from sleep and calling: "My father, my father!"

It was no echo; the prayer of Hermas was answered.

I have brought this story to you because I know

that to many of you it is your own story. You have lost out of your heart all that personal and real conception of God which made your prayer and your faith a comforting reality in which you could trust. You are wandering in the darkness without God and without hope in the world. God help me to bring back the lost word to you! Open your heart and let him come back to you again with all the old tenderness of sympathy and love.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE EASTER CONSPIRACY

Some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money and did as they were taught.—*Matthew xxviii, 11-15.*

MODERN cities have not gained so many points in deviltry after all. It is very easy to read between the lines here and see the skeleton of a whole political machine. The governor was the city boss in politics; he was a carpet-bagger from Rome, and though he was independent of these fellows in a certain way, he found it necessary, in order to keep his fences up and hold himself solid in the saddle, to keep a strong political machine among the local politicians at Jerusalem. These elders and chief priests talk a language that is very well known in our modern towns to-day. It is the language of the man with a "pull." The soldiers, scared out of

their wits, came hurrying as fast as their legs could carry them into the city with the marvelous story that, while they watched the sealed tomb in Joseph's garden, suddenly the earth rocked to and fro under their feet and a great being clothed with lightning came down from the sky and rolled away the huge stone door from the tomb they were guarding. What could they do but flee? And fortunate they considered themselves to have escaped with their lives. Something had to be done at once to quiet the town. If this true story of the resurrection of Christ went abroad among the people, if these soldiers went about blurting out the simple truth, the whole town would believe in Christ and accept him as the Messiah, and the ecclesiastical politicians in Jerusalem would, every one of them, find himself "a statesman out of a job" in short meter.

In their excitement they send out messengers and gather in the chiefs of the ring to decide on a course of action. It does not seem to have occurred to them to accept the truth as it was, admit that they had been deceived and had been in the wrong; they would risk their souls by continuing in the wrong rather than lose their political control of the city. And so they devise this scheme. They reason: These soldiers are poor fellows, they get barely



enough to keep body and soul together, and a little money will go a long way with them; so we will just draw on the boodle fund and bribe them to keep still, for we shall have the whole city about our ears unless they are silenced.

The moment, however, they began to talk to the soldiers about keeping still, new difficulties arose. The soldiers said, "We are willing enough to take your money and keep still, but we have got to have something to tell. We were left to guard a tomb with a dead man in it, and the seal of the Roman government was put on the tomb; and now the seal has been broken, the great stone door has been rolled away, and the man is gone. The grave is empty. What are we going to say about that?"

To this the schemers replied, "You shall say, His disciples came by night and took him."

At that the soldiers laughed in scorn, and replied, "Nobody would believe that. Have you seen those disciples? You know who they are; twelve ignorant, untrained fellows; there is not more than one of them, that fellow Peter, that has a spark of fight in him—and when this Jesus was waiting for trial he swore he never knew him, and went back on him entirely. Beside these men there are three or four women that have been crying all the time since the crucifixion. We never could make any-

body believe that that crowd of weaklings came and overpowered a company of hardened veterans like us, when there was nothing to gain by it but to get a dead body."

Then some more cunning man among the plotters said, "Tell the people that you fell asleep, and while you were sleeping these fanatical friends of his came and stole his body."

"Yes," say the soldiers, "that will put us in a pretty pickle! We shall lose our necks that way. You know what it means for a Roman soldier to get caught sleeping on guard; his body goes to feed the vultures inside of twenty-four hours."

Then up spoke a sly old elder, with a leer and a wink in one eye, "Don't you worry about your necks. That sleepy story is the best yet. You tell that, and if it comes to the governor's ears, and he shows any disposition to make any trouble for you, I have a pull with the governor and I'll stand between you and all danger."

And so the soldiers were finally persuaded and went out, carrying the money in their pockets and with their parrot-like lie on their lips, to explain away the resurrection of Christ.

It is very interesting and suggestive to note what a diverse group of people will sometimes be gathered in defense of a bad cause. Shakespeare

makes one of his characters say, "Misery doth acquaint a man with strange bedfellows," and politics in defense of a bad cause many times illustrates the same fact.

A gentleman in southern California went out to look for some of his stock that were in danger because of widespread forest fires. When he came upon them he was astonished to find not only his cattle and horses, but a deer, three wildcats, a coyote, and several rabbits, all alive, and apparently in no fear of him. They watched his approach with indifference, the timidity gone from the big-eyed deer, fear taking the place of venom in the wildcat's purr, and a professed honesty shining in the gray coyote's face. The rabbits sat on their haunches, as meek as the pets of children. The rancher drove the stock through the smoldering brush, the deer going along with the cattle, the rabbits hopping along at the rancher's heels, and the coyote and the wildcats keeping pace with the rest. But when the burning field was passed and the danger of immediate destruction no longer threatened, the deer broke into a run for the distant hills, the rabbits were away like a flash, and the old defiance and snarling leer came back to the wildcats, while the coyote plainly showed that he was the same old cowardly, slouching thief as of

yore. How often we see that illustrated when, to save the domination of some corrupt and wicked political machine in a city, saloon keepers and gamblers and prize fighters and thugs and deacons and elders, and even an occasional preacher, will flock together rather than see the corrupt machine go to pieces.

We have here another suggestion which deserves the greatest emphasis, and that is the crime of leading another man to sin. These soldiers were an ignorant type and poor, with but little opportunity for intellectual or moral cultivation, while the men who were bribing them were men of education and culture and wealth. Yet they deliberately bought these men up as they would purchase so many calves in the market, and sent them away with the hired lie on their lips. And, no doubt, if you had approached them about it they would have had some plausible excuse on their tongues, and would have claimed that the end justified the means. But, according to Jesus Christ, to cause another man to sin is just as wicked and damning as to go and do the sin yourself. Do you remember that heart-searching declaration of Jesus when he was setting forth the value of a little child and said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-

stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea?" In that day the mills were hand mills, and the grinding was done in stone basins with another stone worked by hand. That sort of a millstone was just about heavy enough, if it were tied about a man's neck, to sink his head under water and drown him. A great many people condemned to death were executed in that way, so that Christ by this illustration must have meant to teach that to cause another person to do wrong is a capital offense.

This is susceptible of very wide application. Down at the heart of things it means that our attitude toward our fellow-men must be one that shall, in so far as we have the power, lead them in the right way. We cannot draw back with Cain's question on our lips, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and expect to escape condemnation when we stand at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

There is an old story of Edward the Confessor which tells how he spent thirty years of his life in poverty and exile while the cruel and rapacious Danes ruled in England. At last, after the death of the most powerful of the Danish kings, the English people, high and low, recalled Edward to the throne of his father. And when he had been welcomed back by the people, and had been crowned

and anointed as king, and had been honored by all the kings of Europe, his treasurer and his courtiers, thinking to gladden the heart of their king who had known so much poverty, wished to show him the riches of which he would now be the royal possessor. And so they took him into his treasury, and showed him large barrels filled with the yellow gold and the white silver treasure that had been raised by cruel and oppressive taxes from the English people. They thought their new king would be charmed and delighted at the sight, but they soon learned their mistake. The old story says that the king saw a sight they did not see. He saw a fiend, or demon, or evil spirit, sitting on the treasures, mocking and sporting at the miseries of the people. He seemed to see the blood of his poor subjects on the money which had been extorted under the name of the "Danegeld;" a tax that was supposed to be used to get rid of Danish pirates, but which was really put into the coffers of the king. The king's heart was sore to think of his people, so dear to him, who had been pillaged and despoiled; so he caused the treasures to be returned and no more to be raised in that cruel way.

No man can look over modern life, even in our own country, under the Stars and Stripes, and see money brought into the treasury by licensing



the liquor traffic, the stains of blood upon every piece of it—the blood of drunkards, the red heart's blood of drunkard's wives, the blood of little children—and behold the corrupt political machines that in our modern cities sell the law for so much a statute as at auction, that protect gamblers for a reward, that use the police force not to enforce righteous laws or to protect the interests of the people, but as a threat by which to extort tens of thousands of dollars through blackmail, and know this money is used to fatten the creatures of political rings, and to bribe the base and ignorant and so perpetuate the brutal rule of the political boss, without praying God that in every one of our great cities there may be leaders like Edward the Confessor, who shall rise up in the majesty of manhood to scorn the blood-money wrung from the sins and sorrows of the poor.

But, as every question of reform resolves itself back to the question of personal righteousness, it remains for every one of us to smite, with all the power we have, these vicious influences in modern society which degrade and ruin manhood and womanhood. It is better to fail, while doing the best one can for the right, than to shout with the victorious party at the loss of self-respect through having compromised with the wrong. We can stand



by with fidelity and share the fate of righteousness in the community.

A ship arrived at San Francisco recently which had been two hundred and ninety-six days from Newcastle, Australia. She had been in great peril in a storm at sea and had had long delays. One night, when she was in great danger, the captain asked the captain of another ship to "stand by" through the night, and the captain did so at great risk to his own vessel and his own life, but finally was the cause of the salvation of the other vessel. As soon as he was safe in harbor, the captain of the ship that had been threatened with wreck gave his first attention to show his appreciation of the other captain's assistance and sent him a gold watch, and went before the council of the city of Sydney and told the story of his heroism. On learning of it the Sydney authorities presented to the noble captain a medal bearing his name on one side, and on the other the simple inscription, "The man that did stand by."

In the midst of the campaign for righteousness that is going on in our modern life, when the liquor traffic, the gamblers, the plunderers, the thieves, and the political demagogues club together to debauch the courts, to entrap the unwary, to brutalize the poor, to stir the passions of the people, so that

the poor shall hate the rich and the rich shall be suspicious of the poor—and all this for selfish aims and purposes—in such a fight I want to share the fate of righteousness; to be no more popular than Jesus Christ would be if he stood in this place and sought, as of old, to make it easy for men to do right and hard for them to do wrong. Rather than anything else I would have Christ look down upon me and say, “The man that did stand by.”









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